Greening the Desire with Plants in Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*

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Abstract

Written in the Edwardian period, Burnett's *The Secret Garden* (1911) portrays the regenerative dialogue of a ten-year-old girl, Mary Lennox, with plants in a secret garden. Born to a well-off family of British origins in colonial India, Mary is sent to live with her uncle-in-law, Archibald Craven, in England upon the loss of her parents due to the outbreak of cholera pandemic. As a child denied parental love, Mary suffers from feelings of detachment; however, her discovery of/by the secret garden in England leads to a series of psychophysical changes in her, transforming her egocentric and spoiled nature into a self of awakened empathy and desire. In the space she weaves from plants in the secret garden, she substitutes for the lack of mother, revives her desire to persist, and helps her orphaned cousin, Colin, as well, to restore a sense of psychic-physical coherence: entering the solipsistic universe of Colin locked behind the doors, she introduces him to the secret garden and the flower seeds they enthusiastically plant there signal the simultaneous planting of health and joy in their hearts. Taking the secret garden which Mary and Colin dare to confront as a metaphor for the repressed nonhuman dimension of life, this essay argues that in a fashion countering the idea of horizontal progression embedded in traditional *bildungsroman* and thereby contesting the Cartesian idea of human self-containedness, the relation between the orphans and the flower plants they tend in the secret garden draws a literary portrait of therapeutic human-nonhuman plant interaction. Drawing on Roszak's notion of *ecological unconscious*, the essay discusses the orphans' psychic-bodily wounds as stemming from their separation from nature, which takes in the novel either the shape of rose trees, snowdrops, or daffodils on the path of awakening them to their nonhuman potential.

Keywords: Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The Secret Garden*, plant-human interaction, vegetal therapeutization, Roszak's notion of *ecological unconscious.*

Resumen

Escrito en el período eduardiano, *El jardín secreto* (1911) de Burnettt retrata el diálogo regenerativo de una niña de diez años, Mary Lennox, con plantas en un jardín secreto. Nacida en una familia acomodada de orígenes británicos en la India colonial, envían a Mary a vivir con el marido de su tía, Archibald Craven, en Inglaterra, tras la pérdida de sus padres debido al brote de cólera. Siendo una niña privada del amor parental, Mary sufre de sentimientos de desapego; sin embargo, su descubrimiento de/por el secreto en Inglaterra la conduce a una serie de cambios psicofísicos, transformando su naturaleza egocéntrica y mimada en empatía y deseo. En el espacio que teje con las plantas del jardín secreto, sustituye la falta de su madre, revive su deseo de persistir y también ayuda a su primo huérfano, Colin, a restaurar un sentido de coherencia psíquico-física: entrar en el universo solipsista de Colin encerrado tras las puertas, le presenta el jardín secreto y las semillas de flores que plantan con entusiasmo allí, señala la siembra simultánea de salud y alegría en sus corazones. Tomando el jardín secreto al que Mary y Colin se atreven a enfrentarse como una metáfora de la dimensión no humana reprimida de la vida, este ensayo argumenta que, de una manera que contrarresta la idea de progresión horizontal embebida en el *bildungsroman* tradicional y, por lo tanto,

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impugna la idea cartesiana de la autocontención humana, la relación entre los huérfanos y las flores que cuidan en el jardín secreto dibuja un retrato literario de la interacción terapéutica vegetal entre lo humano y lo no humano. Basándose en la noción de Roszakka del inconsciente ecológico, el ensayo analiza que las heridas psíquico-corporales de los huérfanos surgen de su separación de la naturaleza, que toma en la novela la forma de rosales, gotas de nieve, o narcisos en el camino de despertarlos a su potencial no humano.

Palabras clave: Frances Hodgson Burnett, *El Jardín Secreto*, interacción planta-humano, terapia vegetal, noción de inconsciente ecológico de Roszak.

> "When I was at school my jography told as th' world was shaped like an orange an' I found out before I was ten that th' whole orange doesn't belong to nobody. No one owns more than his bit of a quarter an.' [. ...]'there's no sense in grabbin' at th' whole orange—peel an' all."[1] (Burnett 233)

Introduction

Burnett presents readers with a counter-narrative to traditional *bildungsroman* by her portrait of sick(ened) children who mature through their re-turn to nature. [2] Modelled on Enlightenment thinking which cherishes the idea of horizontal progression and proposes an ideal model for the subject as a pure rational self who remains totally detached from the nonhuman, which is equated with the irrational, traditional *bildungsroman* is associated with the linear evolution of characters from childhood to adulthood. Going through a series of experiences grinding down what is considered as the incompatible in them, the characters in an orthodox *bildungsroman* tradition are successfully integrated into society at the end of the story. Though written in the fashion of a *bildungsroman* with its portrait of the traumatized orphans Mary and Colin's psychic-physical growth, *The Secret Garden* rewrites the myth of growth, locating the recovery or the evolution of these children on not a linear but a nonlinear ground. To put it in other words, the psychophysical growth of the children in the novel becomes possible only when they digress from linearity and return to what they are taught by their parents to repress—nature. Pointing to the fictionality of culture's divorce from nature or human subject's separation from the nonhuman realm and hence dispelling the illusion that one needs to cut his-her link with nature to grow, Colin and Mary develop culturally (or in terms

[1] The parable of the orange is narrated by Mrs. Medlock who repeats the words of Susan Sowerby. Pointing to the meaninglessness of grabbing at the whole orange, Sowerby's words underline the futility of humanist discourse's exclusionary and exploitative practices, within the context of which the centre, assuming itself as the whole world's owner, represses the peripheral.

[2] Similar to Burnett who presents a fictional portrait of human-plant relationality by children's re-turn to a ignored rose garden, which symbolizes the times before Cartesian splits, Mary Tyler Peabody Mann's novel *The Flower People* (1862) reflects the inevitability of human-plant intertwinement by its portrayal of a group of scattered individuals gathered around their passionate love for botany and flowers.

of their symbolic self) only by topologically going back to the repressed of culture, that is, to nature. By her such "embrace of the natural, [her] meticulous attention to flora and fauna—and to those forces that threaten life, whether of vegetation and animal or of man and woman," as Verduin argues, Burnett "[breaks] through to an imagination that [is] mythic, to tell stories set precisely in time yet transcending time to discover patterns archetypal and eternal" (66). In this sense, what Burnett does by refusing to follow a linear model in the evolution of her characters, returning to what is deemed as the threatening by the dominant discourse, or problematizing what it means to progress or to regress equals Roszak's demythologization of the myth of Oedipus.

At this point, one needs to look at what Roszak means by his deconstruction of the Oedipus myth. As he points out, what is aimed to be done under the veil of the Oedipus myth working on the collective unconscious for centuries is nothing but the desire to strengthen the idea of linearity that will serve the exclusionary ends of humanist ideology. That is, terrorizing society with the deathly price Oedipus pays for sleeping with his mother, which comes to mean, on the social level, his deviation from the codes of linearity, the spokesmen of modernity inject into the subjects the idea of not breaking away from linearity. So, the separation from mother or nature is considered as a prerequisite to be given a space in culture as an ideal citizen with a capital H, as in the *H*uman. However, with subject standing at mind-body or nature-culture intersection, this ideal model for the subject presented by modernity is shown to be not valid, which also refutes the idea that subject belongs to linear temporality, as remaining sterilized from all the energies of the imaginary or the corporeal dimension of life. Thus, Roszak problematizes the myth of linearity traced back to Oedipus, arguing: "'The primal crime' may not have been the prehistoric betrayal of the father, but the act of breaking faith with the mother: Mother Earth—or whatever characterization we might wish to make of the planetary biosphere as a vital, self-regulating system" (83). Thinking that "the primal crime" arises out of one's total separation from the mother, Roszak underlines the illusoriness of human/nonhuman, inside/outside, culture/nature categorical divides and shifts the focus from *the* Human to human-nonhuman, inside-outside, or culture-nature continuum. In this context, he blurs the boundary between the conscious and the unconscious, as well, arguing that it is only when the subject comes to terms with what is termed as the *ecological unconscious* that s-he can achieve psychic-physical coherence. Though not elaborating on the concept, by the term *ecological unconscious*, Roszak implies conscious-unconscious intertwinement and points to the affective bond between human subjects and earth both of whose well-being depend on each other in a nonhierarchical way. In the context of this, accordingly the idea of mind/body duality is replaced with mind-body intertwinement. So, although humanist psychology calling for the repression of the unconscious also calls for the repression of our unconscious tie with nature or forces us to forget our connectedness with the earth, Roszak, drawing on the practices of precivilized people, emphasizes the significance of untying the chains of our *ecological unconscious* and re-uniting with our pre-

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conscious/verbal/symbolic nonhuman animal/plant self in a topological manner so that we can achieve psychophysical coherence as in pre-Cartesian times.

Revisiting *The Secret Garden* against the backdrop of a contemporary theorist Roszak, I link the reason behind Mary and Colin's traumatized selves denying easy articulation to the repression or denial of their *ecological unconscious*. That is, in a way reflecting that "[t]he Earth hurts, and we hurt with it" (Roszak 308), the unnamable ailment of the children is traced to the ruination of nature or the natural in them. At this point, one needs to look at Stolzenbach who says:

> The rose-bushes are wick, though they appear at first to be dead. Mary Lennox resembles them: she is withered in appearance, hard and thorny in personality. Colin, too, is dried-up, literally withered. Yet as time and the garden work their magic, both discover the life-force within them, an inner greenness, and it is shown that both these children, too, are wick and will reawaken to life and health. (28)

Seen in this light, it could be safely argued that the metamorphosis of these subjects, afflicted with "a psychic malaise, expressed in physical debility" (Verduin 62), into subjects of awakened desire is triggered at the moment when they unlock their *ecological unconscious*, which takes the shape of either the locked or shut up rooms of Archibald Craven's gothic manor house or the shape of the locked, secret(ed) garden whose key stands buried in the ground. That is, daring to confront what lies behind the untrodden corridors of the house or the locked garden, metaphorizing their repressed *ecological unconscious*, Mary and Colin take the first steps to their freedom from stasis or they are fluidified from the cold chains of fixity. The present essay, in this regard, takes an ecopsychological stance, reconfigures the secret garden as a metaphor for human subject's imaginary or the nonhuman potential, which is overlooked as a requirement on the path of earning the label of *the* Human, and argues that the agentic role the plants take on awakening the children subjects, Mary and Colin, rewrites what it means to be a human subject: by the agentive manifestation of the plants on the humans and thereby human subjects' simultaneous regeneration with the plants in the garden, expected to have no space in their solid *H*uman narratives within the context of modernity, what is pointed out in the novel becomes both the permeability of the walls and human-plant interdependence. To explore the ways plants speak nonhumanly to the human subjects and invite them to their affective dance of Becoming, the essay draws on Roszak's notion of *ecological unconscious*.

Germinating Seeds of Desire in the Garden of Chronically Joyless Selves

As victims of parental neglect, Mary and Colin are exiled to a life of sickness, emotional detachment, social sterilization, and lovelessness. To begin with Mary, she is portrayed as being exposed to these feelings even during her parents' physical presence: similar to her father who remains indifferent towards her, her mother "care[s] only to go parties and amuse herself with gay people" (Burnett 9). Also, being "a sickly, fretful, ugly little baby, she [is] kept out of the way, and when she [becomes]

a sickly, fretful, toddling thing she [is] kept out of the way also," "never remember[ing] seeing familiarly anything but the dark faces of her *ayah*" (9). "So distant is Mary from her mother that on the few occasions when she even sees her, she thinks of her not as 'mother' but as the 'Memsahib,'" looking at her "from the 'native' perspective" (Eckford-Prossor 243). Moreover, during the chaotic atmosphere of the cholera outbreak which witnesses the death of so many people along with her ayah, parents, and some native servants, she is "forgotten by everyone:" with "[n]obody [thinking] of her" and "nobody [wanting] her," she is left alone in the bungalow, having no one around but a "rustling little snake" (Burnett 13, 16). With her life of utter isolation and emotional barrenness, Mary turns into a person as "tyrannical and selfish [as] a little pig [that has] ever lived:" supposing herself as the centre of the universe and all the others as being at her service with total submission, she never likes anyone, never establishes an emotional tie anyone, and never feels the need to thank anyone (Burnett 10). What sounds striking about Mary, however, is that she is transformed from a "tyrannical and selfish" self into a self of awakened empathy and desire through her imaginary engagement with plants in her uncle's secret garden.

Although Mary's metamorphosis into a desiring self reaches its culmination with her discovery of/by the secret garden on the Yorkshire moors, even the very first times she is portrayed before her discovery of the garden give some hints as to how plants speak to her: in times of loneliness, she connects with plants (or with her nonhuman potential) which, resurfacing in the novel in the form of flowerbeds or rose trees, speak to her in an imaginary way promising to heal her unconscious wounds and she carves out of desolation a new space of ecological harmony and connectedness. How she reacts in the face of her neglected and lonely state bears vital importance to understand her bond with plants. Entrapped to the walls of indifference and hatred by her governesses and parents, for instance, on the day the cholera breaks out, she wanders out into the garden and plays by herself under a tree near the veranda. While playing there, she pretends to make "a flowerbed" and sticks "big scarlet hibiscus blossoms into little heaps of earth" (Burnett 11). Implying 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 Lilias Craven's legacy" (Rossa 127) and that she has a thirst for evading her sense of loneliness, the way she translocates herself from the cold walls of her parents' bungalow into the imaginary "flowerbed" she creates under a tree sheds light on the role plants take on propping up her desire on the path of turning her into an active agent of life. Similarly, when she is taken to an English clergyman's house after the death of her parents, she retreats into a vegetative imaginary world: feeling a sense of loneliness sweeping over her, she takes shelter under a tree and makes "heaps of earth and paths for a garden" (Burnett 18). Finding Mary "remarkably cool in the face of what would seem a devastating event in the life of any child," the sudden death of parents, Gohlke trivializes Mary's such attempts to take shelter behind a botanical world by her imaginary gardens: "she hardly seems to react" (895). In a similar vein, looking at this scene, Lurie thinks that Mary shows the earlier symptoms of a schizoid disorder:

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"[t]oday Mary, with her odd private games and cold indifference to her parents' death, might be diagnosed as preschizoid" (par. 24). However, what Gohlke and Lurie do not see, in their emphasis on the apathy of Mary is that the way she behaves has nothing to do with lack of interest in her parents' death. Rather, she reacts to her trauma and creates an alternative to empirically-grounded reality by her imaginary infatuation with plants, which can be observed also after she arrives at the Misselthwaite manor.[3] When feeling for a time lonelier than ever in the manor, for instance, she goes out into the garden immediately and "run[s] round and round the fountain flower garden ten times" (Burnett 79-80). By her topological retreat into the imaginary through the plants which find an expression in the form of a fountain flower garden, Mary's yearning desire to fill her holes is implied. What needs to be stressed here is also the inevitability of conscious-unconscious relationality, as embodied in Mary's stretching from the cold walls to plants in search of the *missing* in her.

Drawing a literary portrait of human subject's re-union with the nonhuman dimension of life, with her journey to the closed garden, Mary goes one step further in her discovery of her true self, thereby implying by her activated potential there that as a subject, she is constantly shaped by the energies of the nonhuman plants. Before reflecting on her discovery of the secret garden, thought by Heywood as "Eliot's principal literary source" for his own "rose-garden" image in "Burnt-Norton" from *Four Quartets* (166), it is worth giving ear to the dialogue between her and Basil,[4] which foreshadows her awakening to her nonhuman self:

> 'You are going to be sent home,' Basil said to her, 'at the end of the week. And we're glad of it.'
> 'I'm glad of it, too,' answered Mary. 'Where is home?'
> 'She does not know where home is!' said Basil. (Burnett 19)

To Rohwer-Happe, as seen in this dialogue, with her ignorance about her home country (England) being related to her birth in colonial India, Mary is stigmatized as a "deficient" subject and the illusion of British superiority over the colonial India is perpetuated:

> The function of […] 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

[3] To express Mary's transgressive nature in a more detailed way, I would like to draw attention also to the fact that although the idea of a six hundred years old manor with nearly a hundred rooms in it firstly sounds to her dreadful, she manages to overcome this dread by her imaginary expansion in this gothic setting. Looking at her reaction when faced with a huge natural scenery on the wall of his uncle's house also reflects her crossing the boundaries by her transgressive psychic flights. The very first time when she enters the manor, for instance, its walls "covered with tapestry with a forest scene embroided on it" attract her attention (Burnett 34). Looking at this tapestry presenting her with images of "fantastically dressed" people sitting under the trees, "a glimpse of the turrets of a castle" in the distance, "hunters," "horses," "dogs," and "ladies" (Burnett 34), Mary translocates herself from the site of the physical or the empirically-grounded reality into the side of an imaginary land and crosses the assumed subject/object boundary.

[4] Basil is one of the five children of the clergyman, Reverend Crawford, at whose home Mary stays before moving to England. Due to her refusal to play with Basil, Mary is considered as an incompatible person and she is called by him and the other children "Mistress Mary Quite Contrary" (Burnett 20).

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> 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. (183)

Different from Rohwer-Happe who argues that a narrative strategy has been employed in this dialogue with the aim of establishing India/England hierarchy, I think that Mary's ignorance about her home country already negates the assumed superiority of the colonizer over the colonized, throwing into doubt the established image of England with the suggestion that though epistemically established as the superior of the colonial India, it remains unknown even by an English in origin. This is what Strauß means when he says that in the novel, "aspects of exoticism are reversed and attributed to England" (85). Additionally, I contend that what Basil means when he says to Mary that she is going to be sent 'home' can be taken on the metaphorical level as Mary's return to nature or her confrontation with her unactualized nonhuman potential. Seen in this light, Mary's question "'Where is home?'" expresses her confusion about where she belongs, who she is as a subject, or how unfamiliar the imaginary or nature is to her, given that nature is a home-like space where one can trace the imaginary.[5]

While Mary is often portrayed as taking epiphanic moments into the world of plants to cope with the tension of the cold walls or doors (of ignorance/lovelessness/friendlessness) set before her as if aimed to negate her corporeality or fluidity, what sparks her egotistical dissolution at Misselthwaite manor in the full sense of the term becomes her discovery of the walled garden's buried key, as stated earlier. As told by Martha, Archibald Craven keeps this garden locked and overlooks it as if not existing at all. Though not stated explicitly, why he hates the garden so much is linked with his wife's death, which I read as the murder of the imaginary or the natural. Once being a storehouse of his and Mrs. Craven's good memories, a blissful space where they would tend the flowers together and spend the whole time reading and talking, the garden turns into a grave by the fall of Mrs. Craven from one of the branches of an old tree. Though reminding her uncle of the traumatic loss of his wife there with the premature delivery of Colin, the garden speaks to Mary's unconscious as the motherly space promising to give her a sense of wholeness and expressing her thirst for re-connecting with the lost mother image, as in the days before symbolization. How she feels when she finds the key to the garden by the help of a robin, for instance, sheds light on that the garden and its flower plants speak to

[5] As I further argue, Mary may behave as a spoiled child as a defence mechanism. That is, although her basic needs are met by "servants," "food", and "clothes," with her desires being unrealized due to the tyranny of her parents who scarcely care to look at her or talk to her, Mary is estranged from her corporeal side and suffers for reasons unnamed: "Other children seemed to belong to their fathers and mothers, but she had never seemed to really be anyone's little girl" (Burnett 22). Having anything at her disposal but the love of her parents, in the absence of a paternal figure who will regulate her or mend her holes by cherishing her narcisstic omnipotence, Mary cannot feel attached to society, either. Rather, wearing the mask of an unsentimental or a spoiled child as a defense mechanism, she shelters her feelings of lack. So, it should not come as surprising when she asks "'Where is home?'"—a question which is not expected to be asked by an apathetic person.

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her unconsciously: when finally reaching the garden, she feels as if she discovered one part of herself, which was once familiar though cloaked in the guise of the unfamiliar:

> It was the sweetest, most mysterious-looking place anyone could imagine. The high walls which shut it in were covered with the leafless stems of climbing roses, which were so thick that they were matted together. [. …] All the ground was covered with grass of a wintry brown, and out of it grew clumps of bushes which were surely rose-bushes if they were alive…There were neither leaves nor roses on them now, and Mary did not know whether they were dead or alive, but their thin grey or brown branches and sprays looked like a sort of hazy mantle spreading over everything, walls, and trees, and even brown grass, where that had fallen from their fastenings and run along the ground. (Burnett 96-97)

Being "both the scene of a tragedy, resulting in the near destruction of a family, and the place of regeneration and restoration of a family" (Gohlke 895), the garden, surrounded by trees and tendrils, intoxicates Mary with its stillness and makes her feel as if she "found a world all her own" (Burnett 98): although seeming to be "hundreds of miles away from anyone," Mary does not feel lonely thanks to the blissful space of the secret garden. To the contrary, in the secret garden, "a dormant but numinous center, vividly feminine (because once the possession of Colin's dead mother) and charged with mystery" (Verduin 63), she feels more attached to the idea of living. For instance, even the look of grey or brown sprays and branches not havig even a tiny leaf-bud does not hinder her from wishing to see the garden alive again: "She did not want it to be a quite dead garden. If it were a quite alive garden, how wonderful it would be, and what thousands of roses would grow on every side!" (Burnett 98). Traced to New Thought writers who "stress[ed] the aliveness and intelligence of all matter"[6] (Stiles 310) and reflecting that "the seasonal, natural cycle has never ceased to work in the garden" as "a reminder of constant change and thereby of life" (Lichterfeld 29), "some sharp little pale green points" "sticking out of the black earth" of the garden activate Mary's desire to live more fully than ever: thinking that the things growing might be "crocuses," "snowdrops," or "daffodils" (Burnett 99), she smells the earth and experiences a sense of wholeness, as a subject captivated by the potential of the garden for regeneration.

What Mary does in the face of these sprouting flowers tells more about her imaginary intoxication by them. Reflecting in Shumaker's words how "the hardiness usually associated with both men and the working class extends to a girl of the upper middle class" (366), with the aim of helping flowers blossom more efficiently, Mary weeds out the weeds and grass till making places around them with a sharp piece of wood. Thus, as if repairing her unconscious wounds, she creates a fairyland where

[6] To elaborate on the New Thought Movement, I would like to add that one of its foundational aims is "metaphysical healing" and among its forerunners are Franz Anton Mesmer, Emanuel Swedenborg, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Phineas Parkhurst" (Mosley 44). What lies behind the emergence of the New Thought Movement is the dissatisfaction with the scientific essentialism of the Enlightenment Era and accordingly, based on his practices of hypnotism, Phineas Pankhurst thinks that "physical illness is a matter of the mind" (par. 2). As Holmes, another significant contributor to the movement, also states: "[w]e live in an intelligent universe which responds to our mental states. To the extent that we learn to control these mental states, we shall automatically control our environment" (139).

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she can compensate for her unloved and neglected state by relocating herself in this botanic home: "she liked still more the feeling that when its beautiful old walls shut her in, no one knew where she was" (Burnett 109). Stepping inside the secret garden that "excites [her] unconscious self as a symbol of her own forlornness but also of her capacity for growth and renewal" (Verduin 63), Mary feels as if "being shut out of the world in some fairy place" (Burnett 109). At this point, some questions arise: 'Why does Mary feel so intoxicated in the garden?' 'What is the motivating force behind her entry into the garden?' Or, 'Is this space simply a garden in the literal sense of the term?' Referring to the contrast between formal gardens and the English gardens, Borgmeier seems to answer this question by arguing: "[t]he unique character of [the secret garden] results […] 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" (20). At this point, one needs to look at the following dialogue from the novel:

> 'I wouldn't want to make it look like a gardener's garden, all clipped an' spick an' span, would you?' [Dickon] said. 'It's nicer like this with things runnin' wild, an' swingin' an' catchin' hold of each other'"
> 'Don't let us make it tidy,' said Mary anxiously. 'It wouldn't seem like a secret garden if it was tidy.' (Burnett 131)

To Borgmeier, Dickon and Mary do not wish to put the garden into a certain frame with strict symmetries and this reflects their desire for the nonformal or the nonsymmetrical: "[t]hat the garden should, by all means, be unlike 'a gardener's garden' is a declaration against formality and artificiality, and in favour of naturalness […] as we find it in the English garden" (21, 22). If I expand on the argument of Borgmeier, I can say that behind their persistence not to turn the garden into "a gardener's garden" lies Dickon and Mary's lust for a Pre-platonic or an imaginary-like world away from all the rules or hierarchizing borders, that is, a world not demarcated from the corporeal by formulas and strict walls but marked by a sense of wholeness. So, for fear of being taken out of this blissful context or feeling anxious for the invasion of their fairy-like space (garden) by the Human for its potential threat to the operation of the binary discourse with its non-linear ways of expression, they feel the need to "whisper or speak low" while dancing in ecstasy of nature: "[t]hey 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" (Burnett 190). To put it differently, for the aim of not letting anyone spoil the stillness of this imaginary-like world, they try to hide (in) the garden. To return to Mary's actions in the garden, signifying how she leaves aside her rationalized or standardized self, her act of digging up the earth and weeding out of the garden becomes a part of her therapeutization process. That is, as if digging up herself and breaking herself free from the epistemic borders of normativity, while gardening, she actually feels a sense of unconscious pleasure for the idea of her re-connection with her *ecological unconscious* or for returning to those pre-linguistic times when the inside was not divorced from the outside. How she unties the bonds of solipsism and re-positions

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herself at plant-human intersection by the end of this process becomes more obvious when we look at how she positions herself in her relation to flowers in the garden: "[t]hey had come upon a whole clump of crocuses burst into purple and orange and gold. Mary bent her face down and kissed and kissed them" (Burnett 189). As Lichterfeld states, her "kneel[ing] down in front of the flowers in the garden" is "a gesture that could be interpreted as an expression of reverence to nature and the recognition of its revitalisation in spring" (33). If I go one step further than Lichterfeld, I would argue that her bending in front of the flowers can be taken on a wider context, as the bending of *the* Human or the destabilization of human/plant categorical divide, thereby the deconstruction of the assumed rupture set between her and the flowers within the context of Humanism.

"Like the soul garden in Trine's parable, the secret garden brings health and life to its visitors, but only when it is properly tended," argues Stiles (310). Similarly, Phillips says that "[i]n 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" (350). Different from Stiles who discusses Mary's relation to the garden in hierarchical terms or Phillips who talks on the acculturation of nature, I would rather argue that it is only by their unmediated contact with each other, that is, only when they experience each other outside binarism, that Mary and the garden could heal each other. To put it in the words of Lichterfeld, though "rediscovered at a moment of visible revival," "[nature] has never been dead," "[t]he characters only needed to become aware of nature inside the garden" (29). Accordingly, Borgmeier argues 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" (22):

> 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. (Burnett 198-199)

At this point, it should not come as surprising that the garden becomes a space where the idea of binaries is rendered dysfunctional. As Gymnich and Lichterfeld note, Burnett "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,'"[7] which marked Victorian society (9). Through her engagement with the plants in the garden that blurs the boundaries, Mary the friendless and the unloved, thus, dissolves from the boundaries of the inside/outside divide and begins to love other people. For instance, though not knowing Dickon, called in Kimball's words "a combination of Pan and the romantic child" (56),[8] his relation with animals

[7] (Bilston, "Queens of the Garden" 2)

[8] Kimball further suggests that Pan figure, "combined with a desire for the beautiful unending moment –'for ever and ever,' as Colin puts it–is simultaneously an affirmation of the state of Romantic childhood and a denial of or retreat from change, evolution, decay, and death" and based on this, thinks that "[t]he Magic of *The Secret Garden*, in this sense, is a means by which to stop time." (58). Though thinking in a similar vein with Kimball, I think that the figure of Pan that finds an expression in Dickon does signify

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attracts her and for the first time in her life, she becomes interested in anyone apart from her own self: "'I like Dickon' […] 'And I've never seen him'" (Burnett 78). With the garden being "a domestic space, which allows Mary to explore her undeveloped femininity" (Krüger 74), Mary's relation with Dickon, as Gohlke argues, "gives her an appreciation of how it feels to mother and to be mothered, something she had missed in her relation to her biological mother, who was too preoccupied with her social life to attend to the needs of her child" (896). As I further contend, her love or sympathy for Dickon, "seen first as a wood deity," "Orpheus figure," or "a mystic master guiding [her] to herself and to fulfilment" (Verduin 62, 64), even before seeing him is also imbued with the idea of her move from the sensible to the conceivable, or to what lies beyond the visible or the concrete, which not accidentally coincides with her step into what is deemed by the master's discourse as the opposite of culture, that is, nature. Interestingly enough, Phillips implies that with her move from colonial India to England, Mary is faced with the cold fact of social stratification, learning that "Mem Sahibs and Ayahs have no real place in the British class system" (174). Similarly, arguing that "as colonial subjects eventually submit to the power and authority of colonialism, so children eventually submit to the power and authority of adults," Eckford-Prossor contends that Burnett presents a literary portrait of children's colonialization, of how they are taught to be reconciled with their confinement just like natives: the novel is "travel literature in reverse, travel literature that acculturates not just Mary, but the female reader, the female child reader, into acceptance of their, her, own captivity" (243). Implying that it is only by her move from "India, a world considered exotic, enticing, and otherworldly by most English people, including Burnett's original audience" to Yorkshire that she experiences transformation (242-3), Eckford-Prossor points to the hierarchy between the colonial India and England in the novel. In a similar vein, Randall emphasizes that "Victorian imperial culture makes prosthetic use of the figure of the child" for spreading ideas of conformity:

> Imperial expansion entails encounter with difference, otherness, and if the imperial power undertakes to transform and assimilate the cultural others over which it gains ascendancy, it must also submit to transformation in turn. The Victorians–at least the later Victorians–were aware of this contingency, which has become a basic premise for post-imperial cultural studies, and the figure of the boy here again shows his usefulness. The boy in imperial adventure literature…is often employed as a prosthesis by the adult male characters he encounters. The assumption at work here is that the boy (not yet fully formed socially and culturally) can negotiate difference, especially cultural difference more effectively than the man. (42-43)

To Randall, in line with the Victorians, Burnett employs the figure of the child, though a female child, as a representative of British imperial culture or as a boy-prosthesis,

"denial of or retreat from change, evolution, decay, and death" or "stop[s] time" by countering the traditional implications of these terms. That is, the figure poses a threat to the linearization of time, change, evolution, decay, and death, transgressing the boundary between human subjects and nature, and thereby calling into question the idea of evolution, which is equated with loss of touch with nature and innocence. As it is the central argument of this article, the children mature not in a linear but in a nonlinear way, by returning to nature.

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working both as "an instrument of innovation" and "conformity," as he says that although she "worked to turn attention to the possible roles of the girl in imperial representation," "such innovations clearly maintain a relationship with the original Victorian-boy prototype" (44, 42). I cannot help agreeing with Eckford-Prossor on the colonial implication of the novel that locates India in the lower leg of the binary trap, giving depictions of Mary there as always sick and thin; however, it is worth noting that even if her positive transformation occurs in Yorkshire—the space of the civilized(!)—this transformation is made possible not by Mary's integration into the codes of binarism or the dominant discourse of modernity that takes pure rationality as a reference point for the subject but only by her return to nature, a nonlogocentric space beyond binaries. Moreover, as Mary's transformation is in a nonlinear fashion, we cannot talk of her colonization: instead of being "disciplined", "subdued," "civilized," or rather than learning her "own captivity" or internalizing the colonized/colonizer divide, as Eckford-Prossor states (247), what Mary does, I would argue, is to queer the idea of culture/nature binary by her progress in culture only by her return to nature. The queering of the hierarchies is implied also by the fact that cholera, though believed to afflict only those who are thought to be socially or morally lower than the centre, leads to the death of both the colonizer and the colonized, thereby collapsing the idea of a dominant centre:

> Cholera by the time Hodgson Burnett wrote *The Secret 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 the immoral' [. ...] Despite the colonial attitude, in the end, both colonisers and colonised are equal because they all die of cholera. (Drautzburg 42)

Most importantly, Mary's re-turn to nature in a space permeated with strict rules and walls heightens the degree of her transgression, given that she opens a new discourse, despite the presence of the established discourse. How Mary is restored to health by stepping into the side of what is termed by the colonizer as the primitive is also reflected through her interaction with animals and common people like Martha. For instance, she establishes an empathetic identification with a lamb, that in Verduin's terms stirs her "budding maternal instincts" (64) or though not liking Martha firstly, she begins to like and respect her: she does not find Martha's talk strange any more, feels sorry in her absence, and thanks her when she presents her with a skipping rope. As I argue, neither the choice of the present, a skipping rope, nor by whom it is given to Mary, by a person who is her social inferior, is a coincidence. "Mary's unfamiliarity with this working-class toy [...] emphasises the social 'Otherness' between Martha's family and Mary" on the surface level (Strauß 86). However, on the metaphorical level, the skipping rope enables Mary mobility and implies how her desire is unblocked or her fixity is dissolved. Furthermore, it is implied that her desire is activated through her reconnection with her pre-Platonic or pre-civilized self, embodied in the character of Martha. In this way, also the primitive/civilized hierarchy is shattered given that it is Martha who helps Mary find the key to fluidity. As one of the changes she experiences, Mary also adopts Yorkshire dialect, "signaling

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not only that she is under [her companion's] spell but that she has embraced his world, the world of the common and natural—the world, in essence, of life rather than decay and death" (Verduin 64). Reflecting how her "transformation is effected through the exercise of body and mind, the former working to shape the latter" (Price 7), after a few days spent in the garden, she then feels more attached to life, as evidenced in her increased appetite and awakened ecological sensitivity:

> Four good things had happened to her, in fact, since she came to Misselthwaite Manor. She had felt as if she had understood a robin and that he had understood her; 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. She was getting on. (Burnett 64)

Implying the ineradicable bond between the health of the nonhuman earth and all the human subjects or human-nonhuman interdependence, "Mary develops and grows with the seasonal cycle, the growth of nature" (Lichterfeld 32). Through her walks outside, she gets fatter and leaves aside her joyless childhood times marked by a "thin face," "little thin body," "thin light hair," yellow face, and ever-lasting illness (Burnett 9).

Not surprisingly, the egotistical dissolution of Mary through her imaginary infatuation with plants sparks the awakening of another child figure, Colin. Knowing no 'no' of the servants, Mary takes a walk along the corridors of the Misselthwaite manor and opening door after door, she achieves finding Colin behind one of the closed doors. Entrapped behind the walls of the manor for being accused of the death of his mother, Colin is forced to lead a life of isolation just like Mary. Though normally designated "as the proper hero" by "gender and social rank," he "spends most of the story confined to a wheelchair" and "he is denied his narrative birthright of adventure" (Marquis 165). Taught to believe that he will turn into a hunchback like his father, also, he is forced to wear a brace to keep his back straight. Not conforming to the image of *the* Human due to his weak body, Colin is labelled as the other of modernity. To Phillips, "his indolent, impotent body implies a social critique of the functioning of Misselthwaite Manor" (179). Similarly, Strauß says that Burnett suggests "an anti-imperialist critique by demonstrating the social and moral shortcomings of imperial rule…demonstrated in the metaphor of the neglected children who are unable to flourish under conditions of imperial rule, both physically and mentally" (77). While it may imply "a social critique of the functioning of Misselthwaite Manor" or "shortcomings of imperial rule," the weak or more precisely the weakened body of Colin, as confined to a wheelchair and a brace, I would argue, actually stresses the crisis or the disfunction of the binary thinking on a larger scale and thereby the destabilization of the unitary assumption of subject, for whom only rationality is taken as a reference point, regardless of the corporeal or the bodily. To put it in other words, I discuss Colin's impotent body on the metaphorical level as a sign of his estrangement from nature or of his standardization as a subject of normativity. What is embedded in the figure of Colin, in this sense, seems to be nothing other than the symptom of the politics of normativity. It is worth noting also

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that by the iron back he is forced to wear though not needing it all, what is attempted is to fit him into a certain structure with no bending, or with no conscious-unconscious continuum. However, with subject having not a fixed but a fluid nature bent along the continuum of human-plant or symbolic-imaginary, the wheelchair and the brace to which Colin is confined are revealed to be just a part of modernity's obsession with standardization or control: while the wheelchair enables the big Other to track or control Colin more easily, the brace he is forced to wear to hinder him from bending like a hunchback makes him stand straight or freezes him in a certain form. In this sense, his entrapment behind the cold walls, I argue, is linked with the exclusionary practices of modernity, represing anything that does not conform to the Vitruvian ideal of man. That is, due to his weakness, Colin is considered as an "invalid," which locates him into the lower leg of the binary system within the context of humanist discourse. However, as if rebelling against all the humanist strategies for his standardization as a tamed subject having a knowable structure and easily tracked, Colin dissolves from his solipsistic universe thanks to his introduction by Mary to the *ecological unconscious* or the world of plants in the secret garden. For instance, even the mention of the garden by Mary triggers the dissolution of his fixed ego and as if re-making peace with the repressed, he shows Mary what lies behind the "rose-curtain silk curtain hanging on the wall over the mantel-piece" (Burnett 162): the portrait of his mother that he hides behind a curtain for his inability to come face to face with his repressed unconscious material. Later, when Mary shows him things growing in the garden, he discovers who he is outside his sick(ened) self, and giving up the thought of death, cries out of joy: "'I shall get well! I shall get well!'[…]And I shall live for ever and ever and ever!'" (Burnett 253). Then, he also switches to Yorkshire dialect, "as a language of tenderness, a discourse of intimacy greater than standard English can strain to convey" (Verduin 64). Given that he moves from standard English to dialect, in this sense, can be taken as his resistance to his standardization or the strategies of normativity. As Stolzenbach also states:

> With the speaking of Yorkshire, one leaves the realm of artificiality, of the highly conventional Victorian society, and comes closer to earth, to honesty, to reality. Dialect […] often has the power to evoke far more emotion than 'standard English.' […] because it takes the reader out of the common, everyday world, or conversely, because it returns the reader perhaps, and in any case the characters, to the world of their most intimate childhood, they learned their 'mother tongue.' (28)

Colin's linguistic move from "the highly conventional Victorian society" to "earth," "honesty," or "reality" means also his move to the *ecological unconscious*, or to that pre-linguistic domain where not human words but only the images of nature speak. So feeling as if being relocated in a pre-linguistic domain, when Mary and Dickon show him "buds" "tight closed," "bits of twig whose leaves [are] just showing green, "the feather of a woodpecker" which drop[s] on the grass, stopping every other moment to let him look at wonders springing out of the earth or trailing down from trees," he feels as if being "taken in state round the country of a magic king and queen and shown all the mysterious richness it contain[s]" (Burnett 256). To Krüger, "Colin enters the domestic realm and claims it as an extension of his patriarchal heritage"

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(74) at this moment. Similarly, Marquis states: "[b]y entering into Colin's strange religious ritual," "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" (183). Yet, with the garden being a space where the concept of patriarchy goes bankrupt, I would argue, it cannot be said that Colin declares himself as the centre of the garden. Rather, I would argue, for the first time in his life, he feels his corporeal dimension of life, realizing that as a human subject, he lies beyond the iron behind his back, as he looks as if "made of flesh instead of ivory or wax" (Burnett 260). Joyfully affirming life, then, he says again in ecstasy: "'I'm going to see everything grow here. I'm going to grow here myself,'" "'I'm not a cripple!' […] 'I'm not!,'" "'Everyone thought I was going to die' […]'I'm not!'" (Burnett 261, 265, 270). To Lurie, "though Mrs. Burnett may not have been aware of this," the garden image stands "latently sexual:" "a walled garden-in which a girl and a boy, working together, make things grow" (par. 25). To Verduin also, who stresses the recurrence and intertwinement of "the symbolism of garden and sexuality," "in Burnett's world, sexuality is appropriately quiescent, yet radiantly present in the whole natural cycle of the earth and bird and beast, as well as in the gradual development in Mary of feminine tenderness and the impulse to nurture" (65). While agreeing with Lurie and Verduin for the sexual implication of the garden image, I liken this encounter rather to the encounter between a human subject and his-her corporeal side in a non-hierarchical manner, given that Colin recovers from his hypochondria and dares stand upright and walk round the garden, after visiting the garden for days and planting a rose in the garden:

> The waxen tinge had left Colin's skin and a warm rose showed through it; his beautiful eyes were clear and the hollows under them and in his cheeks and temples had filled out [. …] In fact, as an imitation of a boy who was a confirmed invalid he was a disgraceful sight. (Burnett 307)

Similar to Mary, Colin's interaction with plants in the secret garden strengthens his attachment to life, as understood from his increased appetite and desire, in a way conflicting with his image as a "confirmed invalid."

Conclusion

Though written in the fashion of a *bildungsroman*, *The Secret Garden*, different from a classical *bildungsroman* modelled on the idea of characters' horizontal evolution and smooth integration into the codes of the dominant discourse, locates the psychophysical evolution of Mary and Colin not on a linear but on a nonlinear level. Confined to the cold walls of parental ignorance and lovelessness, these children feel chronically unhappy and stand egocentric. Moreover, with these feelings manifesting themselves in the form of different bodily sicknesses, they are labeled as the other of the dominant discourse. However, through their imaginary infatuation with plants in the secret garden the key of which they achieve finding after a series of attempts, they metamorphose from spoiled, detached, or emotionally dry selves into

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selves of empathy and active desire. This essay discusses the psychic-physical evolution of the characters as triggered by their awakening to their *ecological unconscious*, which is symbolized by the image of a secret garden in the novel. In this sense, their ailment in both bodily and psychic terms is shown to be nothing but a sign of their estrangement from nature or the corporeal. That is, as symptoms of the humanist discourse, that being modelled on the dialectics of otherness or mind/body hierarchical duality, calls for the repression of the bodily (which finds an expression in the novel in the form of a secret(ed) garden and its plants), Mary and Colin suffer both mentally and bodily. Yet, remaking peace with the repressed rose-garden which speaks to them unconsciously as the repressed mother image or the unrealized nonhuman potential, in a way reflecting that "the planet's umbilical cord links us at the root of the unconscious mind" (Roszak 308), they achieve psychophysical coherence in a Borromean nature. Their positive evolution through their move from the cold walls of rationality to nature, in this sense, implies how they shatter the idea of culture/nature or conscious/unconscious binarism, given that it becomes nature, deemed as the other of culture, that opens a path of access to the activation of their desire. Or, to put it in the words of Kullman:

> Mary's and Colin's move from the deadening civilization of the country house 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. (96)

By their move from "the deadening civilization of the country house to the enlivening atmosphere of the surrounding countryside," Mary and Colin confront their imaginary self, which triggers a series of positive transformations in them. Though behaving selfishly and never thanking anyone earlier, for instance, Mary begins to love even the Pan-like Dickon even before seeing him. Similarly, though convinced that he will turn into a hunchback if he does not wear an iron brace and hindered from walking, Colin gives an ear to what nature, or his *ecological unconscious*, tells him—the inevitability of culture-nature intertwinement. So, facing the garden, he gets rid of his chains and awakens to his fluidity. In this sense, the moment when he realizes that he does not need an iron brace or a wheelchair in the garden becomes also the moment of his awakening to the illusoriness of the teachings of modernity, trying to frame anything that does not fit into its ideals as an "invalid." The role the nonhuman garden plays in activating the desire of human subjects in *The Secret Garden* gives in this context a literary portrait of human-plant relationality, countering the idea of human self-containedness.

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