

Religion und Literatur  
Religion and Literature

herausgegeben von / edited by

Prof. Dr. Matthias Bauer  
(Universität Tübingen)

und / and

Prof. Dr. Birgit Weyel  
(Universität Tübingen)

Editorial Board:

Prof. Dr. Bernd Auerochs (Universität Hamburg)

Prof. Dr. Marc Föcking (Universität Hamburg)

Prof. Dr. Lisette Gebhardt (Universität Frankfurt)

Prof. Dr. Hans-Jürgen Schrader (Université de Genève)

Prof. Dr. Jan Stievermann (Universität Heidelberg)

Band / Volume 1

---

LIT

Klaus Antoni, Matthias Bauer,  
Jan Stievermann, Birgit Weyel,  
Angelika Zirker (Hg.)

HEILIGE TEXTE

Literarisierung von Religion  
und Sakralisierung von Literatur  
im modernen Roman

---

LIT

## Vorwort zur Reihe Religion und Literatur / Religion and Literature

Umschlagbild:

Bernard Schultze, *sinks*, in: Franz Mon/Bernard Schultze, Protokoll an der Kette. Vierzehn Gedichte von Franz Mon mit sechs Originallithographien und vierzehn in Offsetdruck wiedergegebenen Handzeichnungen von Bernard Schultze, Köln: Verlag Galerie der Spiegel, 1960/61, fol. 6a<sup>v</sup> und b<sup>r</sup>

Gedruckt mit Unterstützung der Fritz Thyssen Stiftung.



Gedruckt auf alterungsbeständigem Werkdruckpapier entsprechend  
ANSI Z3948 DIN ISO 9706

### Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

ISBN 978-3-643-10499-1

FA  
54A 4160



© LIT VERLAG Dr. W. Hopf Berlin 2013

Verlagskontakt:

Fresnostr. 2 D-48159 Münster

Tel. +49 (0) 2 51-62 03 20 Fax +49 (0) 2 51-23 19 72

E-Mail: [lit@lit-verlag.de](mailto:lit@lit-verlag.de) <http://www.lit-verlag.de>

### Auslieferung:

Deutschland: LIT Verlag Fresnostr. 2, D-48159 Münster

Tel. +49 (0) 2 51-620 32 22, Fax +49 (0) 2 51-922 60 99, E-Mail: [vertrieb@lit-verlag.de](mailto:vertrieb@lit-verlag.de)

Österreich: Medienlogistik Pichler-ÖBZ, E-Mail: [mlo@medien-logistik.at](mailto:mlo@medien-logistik.at)

E-Books sind erhältlich unter [www.litwebshop.de](http://www.litwebshop.de)

*Religion und Literatur / Religion and Literature* ist mit den vielfältigen Beziehungen zwischen den Religionen und Literaturen befasst. In den hier veröffentlichten Studien geht es insbesondere darum, wie der Bezug zur Religion das ästhetische Potential eines literarischen Textes prägt, und inwiefern religiöse Texte literarisch sein müssen, um ihre Funktion zu erfüllen. Literarische Texte dienen durch ihre Gegenstände und ihren Sprachgebrauch immer wieder dem Ziel der Überschreitung innerweltlicher Wirklichkeiten. Das symbolische Potential religiöser Tradition wird in künstlerisch-kreativer Weise literarisch wirksam. Die Frage nach Gott, die Schilderung religiöser Erfahrungen, Anspielungen auf biblische Erzählungen, zentrale dogmatische Begriffe wie ‚Sünde und Gnade‘ und ‚Schuld und Sühne,‘ die Sehnsucht nach Liebe und Erlösung, die Suche nach Identität und die Frage nach Sinn in einem Leben unter den Bedingungen der Endlichkeit setzen Erzählungen in Gang. Engel bevölkern moderne Romanwelten, und Menschen begeben sich auf Pilgerreisen, auf denen sie zugleich bedroht und geschützt sind. Mit dem symbolischen Potenzial christlicher und anderer religiöser Traditionen wird im Verhältnis zu den Ursprungsdokumenten in sehr freier und spielerischer Weise umgegangen, so dass die Religion in der Literatur in ihrem Kontext auf der Basis des jeweiligen poetischen Konzepts analysiert sein will. Dazu gehört auch, dass sich literarische Ordnungsprinzipien auf eine nach Maß, Zahl und Gewicht als göttliche Kunst geschaffene Welt beziehen können. Umgekehrt bezieht sich Religion auf Heilige Schriften, die als literarische Texte menschlicher Autoren wahrgenommen und mit literaturwissenschaftlichen Methoden gelesen werden. Diese ‚Heiligen Texte‘ sind nur durch Auslegungen zugänglich, die zwar einen mehr oder weniger kontrollierten Textbezug aufweisen, aber zugleich mit dem Anspruch verbunden sind, Anwendungsbezüge in einem sich wandelnden kulturellen Kontext herzustellen.

Die Arbeiten in dieser Reihe zeigen exemplarisch Bezüge zwischen Literatur und Religion auf und tragen zum systematischen Diskurs über die Sakralisierung der Literatur und die Literarisierung der Religion bei.

Preface to the Series  
Religion und Literatur / Religion and Literature

*Religion und Literatur / Religion and Literature* is concerned with the complex relations between religions and literatures. In particular, studies published in this series will explore the ways in which the aesthetic potential of literary texts is influenced by religion, as well as the ways in which religious texts draw on literary aesthetics in order to fulfil their objectives. Works of literature frequently use language and subject-matter with the aim of transcending mundane reality. The symbolic potential of religious traditions is realized in a creative manner by literary artists. Narratives are spurred by questions about God, representations of religious experiences, allusions to biblical stories, reflections on notions such as 'sin and grace' or 'guilt and atonement,' as well as by characters longing for love and redemption, searching for identity or wondering about the meaning of their lives conditioned by mortality. There are angels in modern novels, and there are pilgrims that experience danger as well as protection. The symbolic potential of religious traditions, to be found in the sacred texts of Christianity and other religions, is frequently used by literary authors in a free and playful manner, so that the presence of religion in literature must be analysed in the context of relevant poetic concepts. This includes principles of literary form and structure, which may be linked to notions of a world created by a divine artist ordering all things in measure and number and weight. Correspondingly, religion is based on sacred scriptures which can be perceived, and critically analysed, as literary texts written by human authors. Such 'sacred texts' are accessible only by means of expositions that, however restricted by the linguistic form of the original, claim to relate them to changing cultural contexts.

The studies in this series are meant to explore the relations of literature and religion in an exemplary fashion, and to contribute to the critical debate on literature participating in the sacred and religion participating in the literary.

Inhalt

Vorwort	ix
<i>Dorothee Godel</i>	
Zur Aktualität der ‚Jedermann‘-Tradition in der Moderne: Religiosität und Sozialität in Hugo von Hofmannsthals <i>Jedermann</i> und Philip Roths <i>Everyman</i>	1
<i>Birgit Weyel</i>	
Religion als Suchbewegung der Bewältigung von Kontingenz. Katastrophenerfahrungen und ihre literarische Verarbeitung	37
<i>Matthias Bauer</i>	
Werk und Ebenbild: Religiöse Paradigmen bei Dickens	59
<i>Angelika Zirker</i>	
Resurrection and Awakening: Frances Hodgson Burnett's <i>The Secret Garden</i>	85
<i>Wilhelm Gräb</i>	
Der Einbruch der Transzendenz: Döblins <i>Berlin Alexanderplatz</i> (1929) als literarische Durchführung der Theologie der Krise	110
<i>Volker Drehsen</i>	
Zur Blasphemie der Bricolage: Literarische Sakralisierungsstrategien der <i>beat generation</i>	122

<i>Bärbel Höttges</i> „Am Anfang war ...“: Religion, Intertextualität und Identität im Romanwerk Toni Morrisons	149
<i>Jan Stievermann</i> Towards a Theory of the Ethnic Fantastic: A Comparative Reading of Paule Marshall's <i>Praisesong for the Widow</i> and Gloria Naylor's <i>Mama Day</i>	168
<i>David Fishelov</i> The Author's Three Wives: Secular Rewriting of Sacred Text in Heym's <i>The King David Report</i>	205
<i>Erich Garhammer</i> Heils- oder Unheilsgefahr? Religion und Literatur	217
Autorinnen und Autoren	241
Personenregister	242
Sachregister	245

## Vorwort

Der vorliegende Band entstand im Kontext eines interdisziplinären Forschungsvorhabens an der Universität Tübingen, das mit einer Tagung im Jahr 2009 seinen Anfang nahm und sich seit 2011 in einem Promotionsverbund mit dem Titel „Heilige Texte: Sakralisierung der Literatur und Literarisierung der Religion“ konstituiert hat. Dieser Promotionsverbund, der von Vertretern der Praktischen Theologie, der Japanologie sowie der anglistischen und amerikanistischen Literaturwissenschaft getragen wird, soll wiederum den Ausgangspunkt bilden zu einer breiter und längerfristig angelegten Erforschung der Beziehungen von Religion und Literatur unter dem Gesichtspunkt der Eigenschaften und Funktionen von Texten, denen eine transzendente Qualität zugeschrieben wird. Dabei stellen sich viele Fragen, z.B. ob und wie sich diese Qualität in Sprache und Ausdrucksform der Texte manifestieren kann, oder generellere Fragen nach Ästhetik und Religion, etwa im Hinblick auf die Rolle des Autors als Urheber oder Mittler des transzendenten Bezuges. Auch die Frage, wie Texte in ihrer Rezeption und ihrem Gebrauch „heilig“, d.h. in einem bestimmten Sinn kanonisch werden können, liegt nahe, wenn von der Erfahrung bestimmter Qualitäten und von deren Zuschreibungen die Rede ist.

Alle diese Fragen sind für die vorliegenden Beiträge von Belang, die darüber hinaus allerdings einen weiteren gemeinsamen Fokus haben: Sie befassen sich mit Literatur (und zwar weit überwiegend mit Erzählliteratur) der westlichen Moderne seit dem 19. Jahrhundert, also einer Zeit und Kultur, in der die Vorstellung des „Heiligen“ selbst als hoch problematisch gelten kann. Sie ist Teil einer allgemeinen Skepsis gegenüber der Existenz und Wahrnehmung göttlicher Präsenz, doch damit ist das Heilige keineswegs aus der Kultur verschwunden.

Es gehört zu den Denkmustern der Gegenwart, dass mit fortschreitender Säkularisierung und Erosion institutionalisierter Religion – meist ist das Christentum gemeint – zumindest ein Teil ihrer Funktionen von ursprünglich nicht-religiösen Institutionen, Artefakten, Praktiken usw. übernommen wird. Dieses Muster ist unrichtig, wenn es als generelle Schablone dient, doch es ist heuristisch brauchbar, wenn man die Rolle der heiligen Schriften betrachtet, die für Religionen konstitutiv sind. Insbesondere die Bibel wurde in der Moderne zunehmend als Korpus historischer und literarischer, von Menschen gefertigter Texte angesehen, die wie alle anderen

- Yeazell, Ruth Bernard. „Do It or Dorrit“. *Novel* 25.1 (1991): 33-49.
- Yoder, R. Paul. „Blake's Pope“. *Romantic Generations: Essays in Honor of Robert F. Gleckner*. Hg. Ghislane McDayter/Guinn Batten/Barry Milligan. Cranbury, NJ: Associated UPs, 2001. 23-42.
- Zirker, Angelika. „Weak, sexless, one-dimensional, boring? Reading Amy Dorrit“. *Dickens's Signs, Readers' Designs: New Bearings in Dickens Criticism*. Hg. Norbert Lennartz/Francesca Orestano. Rom: Aracne, 2012. 169-89.

## Resurrection and Awakening: Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*

ANGELIKA ZIRKER

*Im Zentrum des Romans The Secret Garden (1911) von Frances Hodgson Burnett steht die kränkliche Waise Mary, die nach dem Tod ihrer Eltern in Indien zu ihrem Onkel nach Yorkshire zieht. Auf seinem herrschaftlichen Anwesen entdeckt sie einen geheimen Garten, der ihr zur Heilung und dem ganzen Haushalt zur Auferstehung aus einem Zustand des Todes-im-Leben verhilft. Der Roman ist in einer christlichen Weltsicht verankert, die mit einer eklektizistischen Mischung von Elementen verschiedenster Provenienz angereichert wird: Philosophie, Mythologie, Magie, Naturmystik, Kindheitskonzepte, Hagiographie, Christian Science und Psychologie. Dies entspricht der Weltsicht und religiösen Überzeugung der Autorin, die auf eine singuläre Doktrin als Heilmittel für das Mädchen Mary und ihre Umgebung verzichtet und vielmehr das literarische Werk selbst als den Ort vorstellt, wo eine Verbindung und Versöhnung aller Mittel zur Erlösung und Befreiung aus dem Tod-im-Leben möglich scheint.*

Frances Hodgson Burnett's novel *The Secret Garden* (1911) evolves around Mary Lennox, a "contrary" (9.66) and sickly girl, who, after her parents' death, is sent from India to live with her widowed uncle Archibald Craven at Misselthwaite Manor in Yorkshire. There she finds a secret garden, which helps her to become healthy in body and soul and to also restore the estate with its inhabitants from their 'death-in-life'<sup>1</sup> which was caused by her aunt's accident and subsequent death ten years earlier.

<sup>1</sup> This article is based on my paper "'Restored from Death': Redemptive Children and Nature in Frances Hodgson Burnett's Writings," presented at the 9th International *Connotations* Symposium on the topic "Restored from Death in Literature and Literary Theory" (Tübingen, July 29 to August 2, 2007). I would like to thank Matthias Bauer and Jan Stievermann for their helpful comments while revising this contribution. – For an overview of the background and history of the topos 'death-in-life,' see, e.g., Blaicher's contribution to the collection of essays *Death-in-Life*, where he traces back the topos to Seneca; as well as Berger's essay "LIFE-IN-DEATH als romantischer Alptraum" on the denomination of the topos as originating in Coleridge's *The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner*; and the articles by Černý and Lelle. Burnett's representation of the motif can be regarded as a return to the theological-soteriological interpretation of the topos, contrary to the prevalent attitude in the

*The Secret Garden* is a story of regeneration and healing. At its centre are the children at Misselthwaite Manor: first and foremost Mary, but also Dickon Sowerby, who befriends her quite early in the story and is one of the few characters that are not in need of healing, and her cousin Colin, an invalid. What is striking about this story is the variety of contexts Burnett draws on when describing the process of healing and of resurrection from death-in-life in *The Secret Garden*: she alludes to concepts of childhood and gardens, to saints and myths, refers to contemporary religious sects and beliefs, science, psychology – to mention only a few of the relevant contexts. This concoction of perspectives and frameworks is bewildering to the reader but actually seems to follow a certain conviction on the author's part: Burnett did not base her story on a single world view because she wanted to illustrate that such an approach does not do justice to the world as it is. All the same, her story shows that it is deeply anchored in a Christian context which is then combined and complemented with mythology, magic, Christian Science and psychology. In *The Secret Garden* Burnett thus seems to develop a kind of eclectic religion of her own that unites all kinds of spheres of life and is able to save people from their despair and misery. The idea of "saving people" (i.e. a function rather than a dogma) might be the perspective in which Burnett unites all the different beliefs. It may therefore be helpful to try and untangle the various contexts Burnett refers to and to show in how far religion is at the background of most of them or at least connected with them in order to gain a better understanding of what is actually going on in this story.

### 1. The Child in the Garden: "Mistress Mary, quite contrary"

The novel starts off in India, where Mary lives with her parents. At the beginning, she is described as a sickly child: "She had a little thin face and a little thin body, thin light hair and a sour expression. Her hair was yellow, and her face was yellow because she had been born in India and had

---

nineteenth century (cf. Horstmann, "Das andere Empire" esp. 186 and my article on Burnett's story *In the Closed Room*). The topic of regeneration and restoration from death in *The Secret Garden* has been noted by various critics; Judith Plotz, for instance, claims that the book treats "with obsessive pertinacity a central theme of re-birth, the movement out of death into life" ("Secret Garden II" 16). Cf. also Davies; Foster and Simons; Gerzina, "The End of an Era"; and Gunther.

always been ill in one way or another" (2).<sup>2</sup> Yet she is, unlike her parents, not destined to die and is actually the only member of her family and of a large part of the household who survives the cholera epidemic: she sleeps through it, which is actually her rescue.

From the moment of her introduction, Mary is not only presented as a somehow dismal child, but she is also associated with gardens: the day the cholera breaks out, she is outside, "pretend[ing] that she was making a flower-bed" (2).<sup>3</sup> And after her parents' death, while she is staying at a clergyman's house, she likewise plays outside, "making heaps of earth and paths for a garden" (9). Even the nickname given to her by the clergyman's children is connected with a garden, and the children sing a garden-nursery rhyme to tease her:

Mistress Mary, quite contrary,  
How does your garden grow?  
With silver bells, and cockle shells,  
And marigolds all in a row. (9)

It is significant that the nursery rhyme has been altered from its usual form; in the version given by Iona and Peter Opie, it says, "and pretty maids all in a row" (*Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes* 355). But as Mary shuns – and has never experienced – the company of other children, she is not given the companionship of "pretty maids" (being herself not pretty) but of flowers, namely marigolds, weeds, i.e. the "silver bells"<sup>4</sup>, and cockle shells, emblems of pilgrims. The garden described in the nursery rhyme is not very orderly with all these things growing together; like the book itself, it resembles a hodgepodge. The choice of these flowers, however, seems to be deliberate: marigolds not only refer to Mary's own name, but marigolds are also commonly associated with "hardiness and regenerative powers" and linked to "Mary's gold," i.e. to the Virgin Mary

---

<sup>2</sup> All references are to the edition of *The Secret Garden* by Dennis Butts. – Bixler claims that the characterisation of Mary at the beginning of the novel relies mainly on "conceptual repetition": "Burnett reiterates how the girl is isolated, physically and geographically, psychologically and socially" (*The Secret Garden* 25).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Burnett's own love of gardens from her early childhood on as described in her autobiographical account *The One I Knew the Best of All*.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *OED* silver *n.* and *adj.*, C2.e (a) silver bell *n.* "1847 W. Darlington *Amer. Weeds* (1860)."



(Ferber, *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols* 123). In Blake's *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, a garden marigold fortifies the heroine Oothoon (cf. 1-2).<sup>5</sup> Mentioning these flowers in the nursery rhyme therefore points to Mary's "hardiness" – she is the only person in the household who does not die of cholera – as well as to her own "regenerative powers" in the course of events. But first of all she has to change herself.

A first change of her attitude occurs soon after her arrival in Miselthwaite. Martha Sowerby, who is supposed to 'wait on her' but is actually Mary's only companion, tells her of her younger brother Dickon, and it is then that Mary is for the first time ever interested in someone beside herself, which is "the dawning of a healthy sentiment" (31). It is also Dickon who makes her go outside before she has even met him<sup>6</sup>: Mary starts to care and to be interested in people.

But Martha not only mentions Dickon, she also – quite consciously and intentionally – mentions the garden that has been locked for ten years as she is sure that Mary will be intrigued by the idea: "Art tha' thinkin' about that garden yet? [...] I knew tha' would. That was just the way with me when I first heard about it" (49). Martha wants to stir Mary's curiosity,<sup>7</sup> and Mary consequently cannot "help thinking about the garden which no one had been into for ten years" (33). It even starts to stimulate her imagination: "Living as it were, all by herself in a house with a hundred mysteriously closed rooms and having nothing whatever to do to amuse herself, had set her inactive brain to working and was actually awakening her imagination" (68), and "[i]t was because it had been shut up so long that she wanted to see it" (68); the garden's secrecy makes it so very enticing.

Moreover, the garden is linked with her aunt, her mother's sister whom she never met. It was closed after Lilius Craven's death – like so many other doors in the house with more than a hundred rooms.<sup>8</sup> Mary is told

<sup>5</sup> For further sources and contexts of "marigold" see Ferber 123.

<sup>6</sup> "It was really this mention of Dickon which made Mary decide to go out, though she was not aware of it" (33).

<sup>7</sup> Webb claims that "curiosity is Mary's saving attribute. She wants to know; she needs to learn, and is therefore willing to undergo a process of change" ("Romanticism vs. Empire in *The Secret Garden*" 94). Cf., e.g., Alice's curiosity at the beginning of her *Adventures in Wonderland* that triggers her wish to follow the white rabbit: "[...] burning with curiosity, she ran across the field after it" (Carroll 10).

<sup>8</sup> The garden thus resembles the room of the dead girl in Burnett's earlier story *In the Closed Room* (1904): it also was closed after her death and supposed to never be entered again. See my article "'You can't stay downstairs.'"

about all these locked doors by Mrs. Medlock; yet, Mrs. Medlock does not tell her *why* all the doors are locked, which is why Mary at first thinks of the garden in terms of "another locked door added to the hundred in the strange house" (33).

It is eventually "the robin who show[s] the way" (chapter 8). He is her first 'friend' and she considers him to be "nicer than any other person in the world" (66). It is also the robin who first makes her aware that she is lonely and that her loneliness is the cause of her feeling "sour and cross" (40). This recognition is an important step on her way to psychic health because, after befriending the robin, she starts to like people: "Mistress Mary forgot that she had ever been contrary in her life when he [the robin] allowed her to draw closer and closer to him, and bend down and talk and try to make something like robin sounds" (66). With the robin's help, she changes, and she is rewarded for not being sour, cross and contrary anymore by finding the garden. The garden – nature – and Mary begin to interact.

## 2. 'Nature's Soul': The Notion of Sympathy

The garden helps Mary to become a healthy child, both in body and soul: it is there that she starts to behave like a child. At the beginning, her behaviour is repeatedly compared to that of "an old woman", especially by Mrs. Medlock (15), but also by Martha who calls her a "queer, old-womanish thing" (74). In the garden, however, Mary knows how to play, and it is through the garden that she eventually becomes a child, which is a way back towards life, i.e. from old age to youth, from death to life – at the end of the process, this is described by the narrator as: "life began to come back" (289), implying that life had left not only Colin and Mary but the whole estate.

This process of 'life coming back' is started in the garden. But the garden is not simply a garden but a *secret* garden and an *enclosed* one, which implies that Mary will be sheltered and protected. When she is inside for the first time, Mary feels "as if she had found a world all her own" (79) that nobody knows about:

Besides that [satisfying her curiosity], if she liked it [the garden] she could go into it every day and shut the door behind her, and she could make up some play of her own and play it quite alone, because nobody would ever know where she was, but would think the door

was still locked and the key buried in the earth. The thought of that pleased her very much. (68)

At first, Mary is not willing to share her discovery but wants to have it for herself: she wants to have a secret of her own, a place where she can retire and is undisturbed.

The garden has the appearance of an enchanted place that reminds her of fairy tales<sup>9</sup>: it is described as the “sweetest, most mysterious-looking place any one could imagine” (78). But it is also a very quiet place; the garden’s stillness is one of the first things Mary notices: “‘How still it is!’ she whispered. ‘How still!’” (79). And it is particularly this stillness which makes her think that the garden is dead; “[b]ecause the garden seems to be a sort of mausoleum, Burnett invokes the quietness of a cemetery to describe the secret garden” (Gerzina, *The Annotated Secret Garden* 71n2). But Mary soon finds that the garden is not dead when she discovers little bulbs. She then starts to pluck out the weeds and, “without knowing it [,] she was smiling down on to the grass and the pale green points all the time” (81). The bulbs are actually “astonished” at this: they begin “to cheer up under the dark earth and work tremendously” (90) after Mary has cleared the space around them, and “they began to feel very much alive” (91), a feeling which is even more emphasised as they suddenly act as focalisers in this passage.<sup>10</sup> The feeling of being alive is shared by Mary,

<sup>9</sup> “The few books she had read and liked had been fairy-story books, and she had read of secret gardens in some of the stories. Sometimes people went to sleep in them for a hundred years, which she had thought must be rather stupid” (90).—McCulloch claims that Burnett was very much influenced by Froebel and his idea of kindergarten: “Here the gardens and respective beds of the children must be surrounded by the garden of the whole [...]. The part for the general is the inclosing, as it were, the protecting part; that for the children, the inclosed, protected part” (Froebel, *Education by Development: The Second Part of the Pedagogics of the Kindergarten*, trans. Josephine Jarvis (London: Edward Arnold, 1899) 218-19; qtd. in McCulloch “‘I Shall Stop Being Queer’” 151). McCulloch hence regards the garden as a “Froebelian protective enclosure” (152) that allows first Mary and then also her cousin Colin to grow healthy and to develop fully, as children should.

<sup>10</sup> It seems as if the moment Mary starts to touch the ground, the garden comes alive again. This imagery is reminiscent of the legends of St. Fiacre, who ploughed a piece of land, and a wonderful garden immediately grew from it (cf. Butler, *Butler’s Lives of Patron Saints* 156-57), and of St. Dorothy of Caesarea, the patron saint of florists and gardeners (cf. Peterson; Butler, “St. Dorothy”), who, when she died as a martyr, had apples and roses sent to her prosecutor Theophilus in the middle of winter.

who becomes “wider awake every day” (90) and has a much better physical constitution. All this happens simultaneously with the coming of spring, when the garden is ready to be restored from death after the season of winter: Mary acts like some sort of Persephone figure, who restores the garden back to life after a season of death.<sup>11</sup>

Nature’s death is thus only apparent; even if it *seems* to be dead, the garden and nature are always alive. The existence of evergreen plants all over the place is rather telling in this respect: both ivy, the plant which covers the garden’s wall, and mistle, contained in the manor’s name (Misselthwaite), are evergreens: mistle represents “life in the season of death” (and mistletoes are part of Christmas customs because of their being evergreen; Ferber, *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols* 126); and ivy is associated with “regenerative energy” as it “represents the victor of life over death (winter)” (101). Both plants are accordingly representative of the restoration from death and of the regeneration after a period of decay, e.g. winter. They show Mary that there is still life although everything may seem dead; hence the association of green with hope, “especially the Christian hope of salvation” (Ferber, *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols* 89). The garden is thus restored from its apparent death with the coming of spring but also with Mary’s help – nature and the human agent interact.<sup>12</sup>

The garden is only one instance of ‘death-in-life’ on Misselthwaite Manor, and it is quite intriguing that Mary, who has experienced death-in-life by being such a miserable child but also through the death of her parents, should actually learn to live and to experience life at a place that has been “shadowed by death” (Dusinberre, *Alice to the Lighthouse* 130) for years: It is Archibald Craven’s devastating grief ever since his wife died that is at the root of death-in-life in Misselthwaite. He has disrupted the circle of life by rejecting his child Colin who was born prematurely, which (supposedly) caused the death of Lilius: “He remembered the black days when he had raved like a madman because the child was alive and the mother was dead. He had refused to see it” (296). Colin lives the life of an invalid; his father hardly dares look at him, except when Colin is asleep,

<sup>11</sup> Cf. the later statement by the narrator: “the secret garden was coming alive and two children were coming alive with it” (290).

<sup>12</sup> The garden is “eterne in mutabilitie” (*The Faerie Queene* III.vi.4.5). Phyllis Bixler Koppes refers to this thought in “Tradition and the Individual Talent of Frances Hodgson Burnett” 201.



and he spends most of the time abroad. The rejection of his child results in his appearance of "a man with some hidden crime on his soul" (290).

Through Archibald's neglect of the garden, the weeds were able to grow without control and to suffocate the other plants. He abandoned both his child and the garden out of grief for his wife, which resulted in the destruction of life around him.<sup>13</sup> In order to restore his estate and his son from death, 'new life' is needed. This consists in the arrival of Mary, who is able to enter the garden through the hidden door and who helps first Colin and eventually also his father to remember Lilius. This memory effects a reanimation not only of the garden but also of the people remembering her.

Archibald Craven wins back his life gradually and 'in sympathy' with Colin. Colin cries out "I am going to live for ever and ever and ever!" (216.292), when he is in the garden for the first time.<sup>14</sup> That day his father feels "alive" (292) "for the first time in ten years" (291): "the black burden seemed to lift itself [...] and he knew he was a living man and not a dead one. Slowly—slowly—for no reason that he knew of—he was 'coming alive' with the garden" (293). The narrator comments on this with the words: "I do not know enough about the wonderfulness of undiscovered things to be able to explain how this had happened to him" (292), but she clearly draws on the concept of sympathy: the understanding that everything in this world is connected with each other, that there is a *consensus rerum* and a continuous conjunction in nature ("continuation conjunctioque naturae").<sup>15</sup> This notion of 'sympathy' goes back to Paracelsus, who explained that "[n]ature was [...] a spiritual total which is reflected in every one of its parts" (Benesch 46; qtd. in Nicolson, *The Breaking of the*

<sup>13</sup> He suddenly starts to think about Colin, after years during which "he had only wished to forget him. Now, though he did not intend to think about him, memories of him constantly drifted into his mind. He remembered the black days when he had raved like a madman because the child was alive and the mother was dead" (296).

<sup>14</sup> This expresses the religious notion that the restoration from death is an anticipation of eternal life, cf. the restoration of Lazarus (John 11:1-45).

<sup>15</sup> See Kranz and Probst, "Sympathie": "Die [...] Koinzidenz, daß einem Teil eines Ganzen ohne direkte Einwirkung dasselbe widerfährt wie einem anderen Teil, läßt S[ympathie] zu einem Begriff werden, der Einheit und Zusammenhang der Dinge ('consensus rerum'), der Gesamtnatur, thematisiert ('continuatio coniunctioque naturae')" (752). In a similar manner, Dickon's eyes have turned blue from looking at the sky (cf. 115). The restoration and development of the children and the garden can also be called 'sympathetic.'

*Circle 12*).<sup>16</sup> Archibald Craven is thus affected by Colin's recovery and, like him, is thus restored to life, which culminates in his acknowledgement of his son. In some respect, Archibald therefore resembles Leontes in *The Winter's Tale*, who rejects his child after he has condemned his wife Hermione. Only after finding "that which is lost" (3.2.135), his daughter Perdita, is Leontes restored from death-in-life, together with his wife.<sup>17</sup>

In a similar manner, the restoration to life of Colin simultaneously sets off a 'restoration' of Lilius, who contacts her husband in a vision and makes him return to the garden. What is more, she seems to live on in the garden – there are "sheaves of late lilies standing together" (303); and during Archibald's vision of her she cries that she is "[i]n the garden" (294).<sup>18</sup> When Susan Sowerby is in the garden and meets Colin, she likewise expresses this thought: "Thy own mother's in this 'ere very garden, I do believe. She couldna' keep out of it" (287).<sup>19</sup> Colin finally partakes in the

<sup>16</sup> Among later followers of this line of thought are, e.g., Jakob Boehme and Henry Vaughan. In the Romantic period, Friedrich Schelling's concept of 'world soul' (Weltseele) can be linked to this line of thought: "Alle Functionen des Lebens und der Vegetation stehen mit den allgemeinen Naturveränderungen in solchem Zusammenhang [sic], daß man das gemeinschaftliche Princip beyder in *Einer und derselben Ursache* suchen muß. [...] Da nun dieses Princip die Continuität der anorganischen und der organischen Welt unterhält, und die ganze Natur zu einem allgemeinen Organismus verknüpft, so erkennen wir aufs Neue in ihm jenes Wesen, das die älteste Philosophie als die *gemeinschaftliche Seele der Natur* ahnend begrüßte" ("Von der Weltseele" 256-57; my emphasis).

<sup>17</sup> See also Butts, "Introduction": "We are in the world of [...] Shakespearian Romance [...], where parents are old or ill or corrupt, and so lose control of events and their children, until the children help to restore them. In the end it is Mary and Colin who rehabilitate the adults, and bring harmony and happiness back to Misselthwaite Manor, as Perdita and Florizel bring life back to the ruined world of *The Winter's Tale*" (xx).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. McGillis 35. The association of the name Lilius with the lilies alludes to the metamorphosis of Narcissus in Ovid: after his death he is transformed into a flower called after him (*Metamorphoses* 1: III.339-510).

<sup>19</sup> Burnett was convinced that the dead lived on, especially after the death of her son Lionel in December 1890. She believed deeply that he was still with her, "was still Lionel, real, himself, able to look over her shoulder and help her" (Thwaite, *Waiting for the Party* 136). This thought not only finds its expression in a letter to her friend Emma Anderson who lost her two sons in 1916 and to whom she wrote, "I am not thinking of your dearests as of conventional angels [...]—I am thinking of them as real" (qtd. in Vivian Burnett, *The Romantick Lady* 378); but also in her story *In the Closed Room*. Burnett found consolation in the thought that the dead are not "millions and millions of miles away" but stay close to those who loved them (cf. Thwaite 136).

restoration from death of his mother in planting a rose, her favourite plant, during his first visit in the garden (cf. 235) and also in no longer hiding her portrait behind a curtain (cf. 274). As soon as he leaves his unhappiness, the whole household has a chance to “awaken” out of its desolate state and become whole and healthy again.

### 3. Christian Science: “Awakening” and Psychosomatics

As “life beg[ins] to come back” (289), it becomes evident that Colin’s illness was mainly based on his belief in it: he was convinced he was ill. When he finds out that he *can* be a healthy boy and “shall live forever and ever and ever” (216), he suddenly *becomes* healthy and can walk. The narrator makes a very clear statement about this circumstance:

To let a sad thought or a bad one get into your mind is as dangerous as letting a scarlet fever germ get into your body. If you let it stay there after it has got in you may never get over it as long as you live. (288)

This implies that Colin was only bed-ridden and ill because he believed in his being bed-ridden and ill. In this conviction he was confirmed by Dr. Craven and the servants who were looking after him: “No one believes I shall live to grow up” (131).

Burnett in this context seems to draw strongly on Mary Baker Eddy’s Christian Science, especially on her *Science and Health*,<sup>20</sup> first published in 1875, as well as on conceptions associated with New Thought and Mind Cure.<sup>21</sup> In *Science and Health*, Eddy goes so far as to declare that the doc-

<sup>20</sup> On the importance of “science” and a “scientific approach” in the overall context of the novel, see below.

<sup>21</sup> Burnett was not a member of the movement, but she was very much interested in it, which has been acknowledged by many critics, e.g. Butts, who repeatedly refers to Mary Baker Eddy’s most important theoretical statement about Christian Science, *Science and Health* but does not integrate them into his reading of *The Secret Garden*; the same applies for Foster and Simons; Parsons; and Wilkie. Gerzina emphasises the influence of “New Thought” (cf. 202n1). In 1909, Burnett published a commentary in the *Chicago Post* in which she claimed that she was “Not a Christian Scientist”; Vivian Burnett, however, in the biography of his mother, admits to her being “in touch with the new religion, Christian Science” (376). According to him, Burnett read *Science and Health* and “also attended church services and testimony meetings, from which she believed she received benefit” (377). But although she was influenced by the Christian Scientist thought, “she was not able to accept it

tor’s attitude affects the patient: “The doctor’s mind reaches that of his patient. The doctor should suppress his fear of disease, else his belief in its reality and fatality will harm his patients even more than his calomel and morphine [...]. A patient hears the doctor’s verdict as a criminal hears his death-sentence. The patient may seem calm under it, but he is not. [...] his fear [...] is increased by the physician’s words” (197-98).<sup>22</sup> Colin’s fear of disease and death is aggravated because his father is a hunchback and thinks Colin will become one as well; “My father hates to think I may be like him” (131). Mary Baker Eddy very much emphasises the importance of the physician’s optimism towards the patient; a problem that Burnett also considers in her novel.

When Colin meets Mary for the first time and she asks him about his condition, he mentions a London doctor: “I used to wear an iron thing to keep my back straight, but a grand doctor 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” (129). Later, Mary refers to this doctor when Colin tells her that he is convinced of his early death, and she wants to reassure him of his health:

“Did he say you were going to die?”

“No.”

“What did he say?”

“He didn’t whisper,” Colin answered. “Perhaps he knew I hated whispering. I heard him say one thing aloud. He said, ‘The lad might live if he would make up his mind to it. Put him in the humour.’ It sounded as if he was in a temper.” (149)<sup>23</sup>

wholly, and, though, from time to time she turned to it for help, she never absolutely enrolled herself as a Scientist” (377).—For further information about Mary Baker Eddy and her connection, e.g. with the New Thought movement as well as mind cure, see Albanese, esp. 283-300 and Parker 109-29.

<sup>22</sup> Earlier in her text, Eddy enumerates “Medical errors,” among them the following: “Why declare that the body is diseased, and picture this disease to the mind, rolling it under the tongue as a sweet morsel and holding it before the thought of both physician and patient? We should understand that the cause of disease obtains in the mortal human mind, and its cure comes from the immortal divine mind. We should prevent the images of disease from taking form in thought, and we should efface the outlines of disease already formulated in the minds of mortals” (174-75).

<sup>23</sup> Butts refers to Mary Baker Eddy in this context: “the doctor’s views here [...] sound like common sense but may owe something to Christian Science” (313n149).

The difference between this doctor and Dr. Craven becomes evident when the two children are discovered by him and Mrs. Medlock, and Colin asks to go out; Dr. Craven's advice is that "he must not forget that he was ill; he must not forget that he was very easily tired" (152-53). Mary's insight is in this context emphasised as she thinks "that there seemed to be a number of uncomfortable things he was not to forget" (153). Eventually, Colin's first healthy sentiment is that he "*want[s]* to forget" his illness and that this is why he longs for Mary's company as "[s]he makes [him] forget it" (153). She has understood that the mind affects the body, and she proves right: as soon as he is able to forget about his illness and not to think about it constantly, Colin is indeed healed.

This effect of the mind on the body is described at length in chapter 27 of *The Secret Garden*:

So long as Mistress Mary's mind was full of disagreeable thoughts about her dislikes and her sour opinions of people and her determination not to be pleased by or interested in anything, she was a yellow-faced, sickly, bored and wretched child. Circumstances, however, were very kind to her, though she was not at all aware of it. They began to push her about for her own good. When her mind gradually filled itself with robins, and moorland cottages crowded with children, with queer crabbed old gardeners and common little Yorkshire housemaids, with springtime and with secret gardens coming alive day by day, and also with a moor boy and his 'creatures,' there was no room left for the disagreeable thoughts which affected her liver and her digestion and made her yellow and tired.

So long as Colin shut himself up in his room and thought only of his fears and weakness and his detestation of people who looked at him and reflected hourly on humps and early death, he was a hysterical, half-crazy little hypochondriac who knew nothing of the sunshine and the spring, and also did not know that he could get well and could stand upon his feet if he tried to do it. When new beautiful thoughts began to push out of the old hideous ones, *life began to come back to him*, his blood ran healthily through his veins and strength poured into him like a flood. (288-89; my emphasis)

The children's development is parallel, which is further emphasised by the parallelism introducing these passages about Mary's and Colin's improving health and spirits. There is a clear emphasis on the fact that mainly their thoughts affected their health: while Mary was thinking only about

disagreeable things, she was "yellow and tired," which implies that her thoughts "affected her liver and her digestion."

Similarly, Colin is restored from his seemingly impending death; his symptoms are explained through his fear of being sick, which eventually did make him sick: "Thousands of instances could be cited of health restored by changing the patient's thoughts regarding death. A scientific mental method is more sanitary than the use of drugs, and such a mental method produces permanent health" (Eddy, *Science and Health* 79). This is why Dr. Craven has never been able to help Colin: the boy does not need medicine in the form of physical treatment and drugs, but an overall positive attitude in order to become healthy. "Christian Science declares that sickness is a belief, a latent *fear*, made manifest on the body in different forms of fear or disease. This fear is formed unconsciously in the silent thought" (Eddy, *Retrospection and Introspection* 61; my emphasis).<sup>24</sup> That Mary understands what is going on with Colin and that his symptoms can be read against the background of Christian Science becomes evident when, for instance, she identifies "his hysterical hidden fear" (176) as the cause for his tantrums.

That Colin has this fear becomes evident during the tantrum scene when he declares that he "felt the lump" (180) on his back: "I knew I should. I shall have a hunch on my back and then I shall die" (180). Mary calls this "hysterics" and examines his back but cannot find anything: "There's not a lump as big as a pin!" (181). It turns out that Colin had developed a secret fear of turning into a hunchback and had not dared pronounce it. When he finds out that he had really been 'hysterical,' he cries tears of "relief" (182) and decides to go outside with Mary, where he grows healthy. Colin's lump existed only in his mind; as soon as Mary tells him the truth, his healing begins.

<sup>24</sup> Although various critics refer to the psychosomatic origin of Colin's ailment, they hardly ever connect this to Burnett's knowledge of the principles of Christian Science. This becomes evident in Almond's essay where she describes the illustration of "a therapeutic process" in *The Secret Garden* but does not take contemporary contexts into account; cf. also Keyser; McCulloch. Gerzina reads *The Secret Garden* as Burnett's offering of "three overlapping belief systems. The first is a nod to traditional Christianity, as practised in the Church of England. The second is a combination of self-healing and positive thinking, what today we would probably refer to as New Age. Third is a kind of paganism, drawing on nature's power over all creatures, including mankind, that hearkens back to nineteenth-century Romanticism [...]. Joy and healing resulted from each" ("Introduction" xxvii).

Another instance of the influence of Christian Science and Mary Baker Eddy's thought is linked to the concept of "awakening." After Mary's discovery of the garden, her own improvement is likewise accelerated: she becomes pretty, develops a healthy appetite, starts to like herself as well as other people and feels "wider awake every day" (90). Being awake and awakening is a development that both Mary and Colin experience throughout the narrative.

The first awakening to take place in the novel takes place in India. Mary sleeps through the cholera epidemic that kills her parents: "When she awakened she lay and stared at the wall" (5). Shortly after this she is found by some soldiers and eventually sent to England. Sleeping and waking up in this case means the start of her new life: "Mary's journey begins during the cholera epidemic when she experiences a symbolic death and rebirth" (Parsons, "'Otherways' into the Garden" 260). This also implies an awakening to a new life: nothing will ever be the same for Mary, and she embarks on a journey that means a change not only of circumstance but also of her character. When she grows more and more healthy she also becomes "wider awake" (90), whereas earlier, in India, for instance, she "used to be always tired" (108).

During her first meeting with Colin, he is not sure whether he is dreaming; "Mary's first task is to 'awaken' him" (Gunther, "The Secret Garden Revisited" 163). She tells him that she is not merely an apparition in his dream but that they "'re both awake" (129). "'Awakening' Colin and 'awakening' the garden are Mary's two great tasks but obviously the key one on which all else depends is the awakening of the garden" (Gunther, "The Secret Garden Revisited" 163).<sup>25</sup> Eventually the whole household 'awakes' and is restored from its death-in-life.

The capacity to 'awake' presupposes the state of being asleep.<sup>26</sup> Colin explains that "[s]ometimes when I open my eyes I don't believe I'm awake" (129). When he first meets Mary, he apparently is awake and does not dream of the encounter – but at the same time he is not. His is trapped

<sup>25</sup> Cf. also Dickon's comment: "It's th' best fun I ever had in my life—shut in here an' wakenin' up a garden" (109).

<sup>26</sup> Cf. *OED* "awake, v. 2. fig. To rise from a state resembling sleep, such as death, indifference, inaction; to become active or vigilant; to bestir oneself."—A very similar metaphorical understanding of awakening can also be found in Kate Chopin's novella *The Awakening*, first published in 1899.

in his sickness, "from which the patient needs to be awakened" (Eddy, *Science and Health* 417). In Christian Science, 'awakening' is directly linked to the restoration from death. Mary Baker Eddy refers to the story of Lazarus, who was restored from death by Jesus, and reads this biblical passage in the light of 'awakening': "Jesus awakened Lazarus from the dream, illusion, of death" (*Science and Health* 493).<sup>27</sup> In *The Secret Garden*, awakening becomes a form of restoration from death,<sup>28</sup> and in this Colin resembles those Biblical children who are restored from death, e.g. the boy of Naïn (Luke 7:11-17) and the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5:21-43). The restoration from death of these children has been verbally linked to the act of 'getting up'.<sup>29</sup> Colin draws his development to a close when he finds the courage to leave his wheelchair and is able to walk. His body and mind are therefore closely connected, and it is only when he no longer believes in his illness, that he physically recovers: the psychological realm therefore interacts with the physical.

#### 4. The Natural and the Supernatural: "Science" and "Magic"

Colin's recovery is brought about by "Magic," as Mary calls it (221). The children find it in the garden, which is the key to the overall restoration, and within it all parts are connected with one another, 'in sympathy'.<sup>30</sup> Nature is very much 'alive' there, everything is animate, and one chapter in the garden is even partly narrated from the perspective of the robin and his mate ("The Curtain," chapter 25). The secret garden brought back to life by Mary and Dickon is at the outset the only place at Misselthwaite where life can be experienced.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup> One of the most evident allusions to the biblical account of Lazarus in *The Secret Garden* is the choice of names: Martha and Mary were Lazarus's sisters (cf. Gerzina *The Annotated Secret Garden* 23n1).

<sup>28</sup> The motto of Christian Science is "Raise the Dead," which is explained by Eddy in *Retrospection and Introspection* 88. Christ's Resurrection is therefore also understood in the light of the power of mind over matter (cf. *Science and Health* 44-46).

<sup>29</sup> Jesus says to the girl "Talitha cumi; which is being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise" (Mark 5:41); cf. the subtitle of the pictorial representation of this story in St. Georg church (on the Reichenau island, Lake Constance) which says 'get up, and thus return to life.'

<sup>30</sup> For the relation between the garden and Colin's healing, see also Adams.

<sup>31</sup> This is similar to the imagery of the rooftop-garden in Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*, where Jenny Wren cries out "Come up and be dead" (280), which expresses her feeling of tranquillity when she is there; she associates this feeling with death.

In the garden the children can behave like children: within the house they are hardly allowed to do so nor are they encouraged; it is a place that they can "reclaim" for themselves (McCulloch, "I Shall Stop Being Queer" 161).<sup>32</sup> Being in the house all the time and having his own way in ordering servants about and behaving like an invalid, for instance, "has made [Colin] so queer" (238) and let him develop into "a rude little brute" (237) rather than a lovable (and loving) child. Being in the garden allows Colin to enlarge his knowledge not only of the world but also of himself; while he stayed inside, his knowledge was limited: "He knows a good many things out of books but he doesn't know anything else" (166).<sup>33</sup> Now he is sure that he is able to live, and he no longer brags that he will die as he did earlier.<sup>34</sup> He is not only cured physically but also from his selfishness, which caused other people's dislike of him<sup>35</sup>:

"I shall stop being queer," he said, "if I go every day to the garden. There is Magic in there—good Magic, you know, Mary. I am sure there is."

"So am I," said Mary.

"Even if it isn't real Magic," Colin said, "we can pretend it is. *Something* is there—*something!*"

"It's Magic," said Mary, "but not black. It's as white as snow."

They always called it Magic and indeed it seemed like it in the months that followed [...]. (239)

---

Life is downstairs, but death, meaning real life, can only be found up on the roof, in the garden (cf. Černy 164). In his study on *Heaven, Hell, and the Victorians*, Wheeler explains that *Our Mutual Friend* "continues Dickens's exploration in his novels of the 1860s of the inner or spiritual life, and of the hope of salvation and transcendence in a fallen world which threatens to return to its original primeval state, expressed in the novel's insistent symbolism of rising and falling" (221-22).

<sup>32</sup> "Only when fertile rejuvenation, through the presence of childhood, has reversed barren impotence can adult culture redeem paradise" (McCulloch, "I Shall Stop Being Queer" 161). She further refers to a similar imagery in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* where the Fisher King's impotence must likewise be cured. Humphrey Carpenter also refers to Eliot (189).

<sup>33</sup> He eventually is able to read in the book of nature; cf. Browne, *Religio Medici*: "[...] there are two books from whence I collect my divinity: besides that written one of God, another of his servant Nature—that universal and public manuscript that lies expanded [sic] unto the eyes of all" (1.16.16-17).

<sup>34</sup> Earlier in the story, Mary "felt rather as if he almost boasted about it" (148).

<sup>35</sup> "It is the natural world that is going to restore Colin to life" (Bawden, "Returning to The Secret Garden" 168).

Their understanding of magic is a positive one, without any 'dark' associations.<sup>36</sup> What they experience in the garden is actually natural – the plants growing, the birds singing etc. – but for them it is so outstanding that these natural processes obtain the appearance of being magical. Likewise Colin's recovery from his illness and his rude manners becomes an expression of the garden's magic being at work.

Colin is so intrigued by the idea of magic that he wants to make an experiment:

Magic is a great thing and scarcely any one knows anything about it except a few people in old books—and Mary a little, because she was born in India where there are fakirs. I believe Dickon knows some Magic, but perhaps he doesn't know he knows it. He charms animals and people. [...] I am sure there is Magic in everything, only we have not sense enough to get hold of it and make it do things for us—like electricity and horses and steam. (242-43)

He approaches the topic from a rather scientific angle: he approaches and describes what he and Mary experience as supernatural with 'scientific' means; what is remarkable, though, is his awareness that Dickon has some innate knowledge of magic, or at least of how it works as he is able to "charm animals and people."

Dickon thus becomes part of the magic at work: "There really was a sort of Magic about Dickon" (209). Dickon has an instinctive knowledge of people and nature: "He understood what Colin felt better than Colin did himself. He understood by a sort of instinct so natural that he did not know it was understanding" (279). Before either Mary or Colin ever meet him, he already has a positive impact on both of them,<sup>37</sup> and, as opposed to most of the other characters in the story, he "instinct[ively]" knows how to treat them. This unreflected, instinctive knowledge helps them behave naturally in his company.

Martha talks about Dickon quite early in the novel: his first appearance illustrates his innate understanding of nature that has already been mentioned by his sister who says that he "can make a flower grow out of a

---

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Prospero's practice of 'white magic' in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. On this aspect see, e.g., Ide; Holm; and Corfield.

<sup>37</sup> Mary thinks about this when she tells Colin about him during their second meeting: "She had liked to hear Martha talk about him" (146).

brick walk. Mother says he just whispers things out of the ground" (83). He is the character in the book who embodies and personifies the concept of sympathy:

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 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. (97)

By means of this portrayal, Dickon appears as an all-embracing symbol of nature. His playing the pipe and luring animals alludes to a figure from mythology and to a saint: Dickon is both a Pan-figure and an embodiment of St. Francis, who was famous for talking (and preaching) to animals, especially birds (cf. Voragine, *Legenda Aurea* 429; *Lexikon der Christlichen Ikonographie* 287).<sup>38</sup> When, at one instant, Mary wonders whether "it was possible for him to quietly turn green and put out branches and leaves" (162), she further alludes to the man/tree-motif.<sup>39</sup> In Dickon, therefore, a variety of concepts and contexts are united, all tending to show his particular connection to nature.

What Dickon does, i.e. his enchantment of the animals, his talking to them, and his ability to help Mary and Colin on their way to health also looks as if it were magical. This seems to be something he has inherited from his mother, who also has a natural understanding of what Mary and

<sup>38</sup> Interestingly, in the *Legenda Aurea*, St. Francis is also described as being famous for resurrecting dead children back to life (cf. 433-34). On Pan see, e.g., *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* 1027.

<sup>39</sup> This image can be found, e.g., in George Herbert's "The Answer" in which the speaker represents himself as a tree: "My comforts drop and melt away like snow: / I shake my head, and all the thoughts and ends, / Which my fierce youth did bandie, fall and flow / Like leaves about me" (*The Temple* 336.1-4). For an explanation of these lines and the topos in more general terms see Leimberg 269-70. She makes note of the tradition of the man/tree-motif in emblems and refers to Henkel and Schöne 145-87.

Colin need. Susan Sowerby learns about Mary from Mrs. Medlock and from her daughter Martha, and very soon after Mary's arrival at Misselthwaite sends her a skipping-rope so that she can move about in the gardens to get some "strength in [her] arms and legs" (73). When Mary and Colin spend their days in the garden and dare not eat as much as they would like to in order not to give away their secret, she sends them food. Eventually, she visits them in the garden ("It's Mother," chapter 26), at the very moment when the children sing the Doxology together with Ben Weatherstaff:

With the ivy behind her, the sunlight drifting through the trees and dappling her blue cloak, and her nice fresh face smiling across the greenery she was rather like a softly coloured illustration in one of Colin's books. (281)

Her blue cloak is evocative of the Virgin Mary<sup>40</sup>; this connection is enhanced as Susan Sowerby seems unreal at first, resembling a book illustration – she is introduced as if she were more like an apparition than a real person. But the children draw near her like Dickon's animals draw near him – "she understood them as Dickon understood his 'creatures'" (284) – because they instantaneously understand that she is a well-meaning character who gives them a "delightful feeling" (284) and is able to provide Mary and Colin with what they need most: motherly care.<sup>41</sup>

While with her, the children address the topic of magic. Susan says about it:

I never knowed it by that name but does th' name matter? [...] Th' same thing as set th' seeds swellin' an' th' sun shinin' made thee a well lad an' it's th' Good Thing. It isn't like us poor fools as think it matters if us is called out of our names. Th' Big Good Thing doesn't stop to worrit, bless thee. [...] Never thee stop believin' in th' Big

<sup>40</sup> "Even her blue cloak makes her suit the image of the Madonna, as she is portrayed in the great art of the West. [Susan in fact means 'lily' – a flower often associated with purity and thus with the Madonna]" (Stolzenbach, "Braid Yorkshire" 27). See also Roxburgh 127; and Stewart 42. This is even more so the case as the image of the enclosed garden is likewise associated with Mary, who has been called a *hortus conclusus*.

<sup>41</sup> Bixler speaks of a "community of mothers" that is connected with the garden and seems to allude to Lilies here, who is supposed to 'live on' there ("Gardens, Houses, and Nurturant Power in *The Secret Garden*" 12).



Good Thing an' knowin' the world's full of it—an' call it what tha' likes. Tha' wert singin' to it when I come into th' garden. [...] Th' Magic listened when tha' sung th' Doxology. It would ha' listened to anything tha'd sung. It was th' joy that mattered. Eh! Lad, lad—what's names to th' Joy Maker. (284-85)

Although Burnett does not generally propagate religious thought in her novel, this is the exception to the rule and as clear a statement as it can get: in this passage she refers to some transcendent superior being that is responsible for everything that exists in the world. She thus combines the notion of vague impersonal Deity ("Big Good Thing") with the notion of a personal God who worries and is addressed as Father, the "Doxology" being a hymn to praise God, the "Father."<sup>42</sup> What the children have so far called "Magic," Susan Sowerby names "th' Big Good Thing" and "th' Joy Maker." According to her, it does not matter which name one gives to this supreme instance – she tells the children to "call it what tha' likes." What matters is to believe in this "Good Thing" and worship it with "joy." Colin seems to understand this when he says: "Perhaps it means just what I mean when I want to shout out that I am thankful to the Magic. [...] Perhaps they are both the same thing" (280). Burnett refrains from making a straightforward religious (or theological) statement and rather shows how nature and the supernatural are linked and depend on one another.

\*\*\*\*\*

In *The Secret Garden*, a whole household awakens and re-enters life. As opposed to, for example, Burnett's earlier story *In the Closed Room*, this awakening from death-in-life and the process of restoration is found in the realm of this world. In her later novel, Burnett refers to the imagery of the enclosed garden as a place of healing. The story of Mary is one of discoveries (cf. Foster/Simons, *What Katy Read* 173): she finds out something about herself, namely that she is contrary, and as soon as this process sets in, she is ready to discover the garden and eventually her cousin Colin. With her arrival in Misselthwaite Manor she restores a whole community and a place back to life.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. *OED* "doxology, *n.*": "b. A short formula of praise to God, esp. one of liturgical use. [...] 1894 *Times* (Weekly ed.) 16 Feb. 129/4 The well-known Doxology beginning, 'Praise God from whom all blessings flow.'"

What the reader encounters in this novel is a wide variety of contexts that range from natural philosophy over science to myth and religion. Burnett's overall conviction seems to be based on all of them and is channelled into a work of art, i.e. into a realm where they may all cohere. In her article, published in 1909, about her being "Not a Christian Scientist," she wrote: "It seems to me that in the field of art we so frequently stumble upon marvellous contradictions to scientific assumption that there is a far greater prospect in art than there is in science" (249). She refused to trust in one remedy only – be it science, psychology, religion, philosophy – but rather brought them all together in her novel. In doing so, she abstained from unequivocally propagating a dogma but rather focused on what, to her, appeared as the main function of this hybrid artistic faith: addressing the need and offering the possibility of saving and of being saved. And this focus may be one of the reasons why, a hundred years after its first publication, *The Secret Garden* is still being read and has become a classic for children and adults alike.

#### Works Cited

- Adams, Gillian. "Secrets and Healing Magic in *The Secret Garden*." *Triumphs of the Spirit in Children's Literature*. Ed. Francelina Butler/Richard Rotert. Hamden: Library Professional Publications, 1986. 42-53.
- Albanese, Catherine L. *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2007.
- Almond, Barbara R. "The Secret Garden: A Therapeutic Metaphor." *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* 45 (1990): 477-94.
- Bawden, Nina. "Returning to *The Secret Garden*." *Children's Literature in Education* 19.3 (1988): 165-69.
- Benesch, Otto. *The Art of the Renaissance in Northern Europe*. London: Phaidon, 1965.
- Berger, Dieter A. "LIFE-IN-DEATH als romantischer Alptraum: S. T. Coleridge's *The Ancient Mariner*." *Death-in-Life*. Ed. Günther Blaicher. 123-39.
- Bixler, Phyllis. "Gardens, Houses, and Nurturant Power in *The Secret Garden*." *Romanticism and Children's Literature in Nineteenth-Century England*. Ed. James Holt McGavran. Athens: The U of Georgia P, 1991. 208-25.
- . "The Secret Garden 'Misread': The Broadway Musical as Creative Interpretation." *Children's Literature* 22 (1994): 101-23.
- . *The Secret Garden: Nature's Magic*. New York: Twayne, 1996.

- Blaicher, Günther, ed. *Death-in-Life: Studien zur historischen Entfaltung der Paradoxie der Entfremdung in der englischen Literatur*. Trier: WVT, 1998.
- . "Die Paradoxie vom lebendigen Totsein in England: Versuch einer historischen Skizze." *Death-in-Life: Studien zur historischen Entfaltung der Paradoxie der Entfremdung in der englischen Literatur*. Ed. Günther Blaicher. Trier: WVT, 1998. 11-45.
- Blake, William. *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*. 1793. Facsimile edition. London: J. M. Dent, 1932.
- Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*. Ed. John Ayto. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005.
- Browne, Sir Thomas. *Religio Medici, Hydriotaphia and The Garden of Cyrus*. Ed. R. H. A. Robbins. Oxford: Clarendon, 1972.
- Burnett, Frances Hodgson. *The One I Knew the Best of All: A Memory of the Mind of a Child*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893.
- . *In the Closed Room*. Illustr. Jessie Wilcox Smith. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1904.
- . "Mrs. Burnett Not a Christian Scientist." 1909. *The Secret Garden: A Norton Critical Edition*. Ed. Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina. New York: Norton, 2006. 249-50.
- . *The Secret Garden*. 1911. Ed. and intr. Dennis Butts. Oxford: OUP, 2000.
- . *The Annotated Secret Garden*. Ed., intr. and notes. Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina. New York: Norton, 2007.
- Burnett, Vivian. *The Romantick Lady (Frances Hodgson Burnett): The Life Story of an Imagination*. New York: Scribner's, 1927.
- Butler, Alban. *Butler's Lives of Patron Saints*. 1878. Ed. Michael Walsh. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987.
- . "St. Dorothy." *Lives of the Saints*. Ed. Benziger Brothers. <http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/lots/lots049.htm>. 02.02.2010.
- Butts, Dennis. "Introduction." *The Secret Garden*. Oxford: OUP, 2000. vii-xxv.
- Carpenter, Humphrey. *Secret Gardens: A Study of the Golden Age of Children's Literature*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1985.
- Carroll, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass*. 1865/ 1871. Ed. Roger Lancelyn Green. Oxford: OUP, 1998.
- Černý, Lothar. "'Life-in-Death': Zur Paradoxie der Kunst in *Our Mutual Friend*." *Death-in-Life: Studien zur historischen Entfaltung der Paradoxie der Entfremdung in der englischen Literatur*. Ed. Günther Blaicher. Trier: WVT, 1998. 159-79.
- Corfield, Cosmo. "Why Does Prospero Abjure His 'Rough Magic'?" *Shakespeare Quarterly* 36.1 (Spring 1985): 31-48.

- Davies, Máire Messenger. "'A Bit of Earth': Sexuality and the Representation of Childhood in Text and Screen Versions of *The Secret Garden*." *Velvet Light Trap* 48 (Fall 2001): 48-58.
- Dickens, Charles. *Our Mutual Friend*. 1865. Ed. and intr. Adrial Poole. London: Penguin, 1997.
- Dusinberre, Juliet. *Alice to the Lighthouse: Children's Books and Radical Experiments in Art*. Houndsmill: Macmillan, 1999.
- Eddy, Mary Baker. *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. 1875/1910. Boston: The Mary Baker Eddy Foundation, 1986.
- . *Retrospection and Introspection/Rückblick und Einblick*. 1891. Boston: The First Church of Christ, Scientist, 1973.
- Ferber, Michael. *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols*. Cambridge: CUP, 1999.
- Foster, Shirley/Simons, Judy. *What Katy Read: Feminist Re-Readings of 'Classic' Stories for Girls*. London: Macmillan, 1995.
- Gerzina, Gretchen Holbrook. "The End of an Era." *The Secret Garden: A Norton Critical Edition*. Ed. Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina. New York: Norton, 2006. 179-86.
- . *Frances Hodgson Burnett*. London: Chatto & Windus, 2004.
- . "Introduction." *The Annotated Secret Garden*. Ed., intr. and notes. Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina. New York: Norton, 2007. xiii-xl.
- Gunther, Adrian. "The Secret Garden Revisited." *Children's Literature in Education* 25.3 (1994): 159-68.
- Henkel, Arthur/Schöne, Albrecht, eds. *Emblemata: Handbuch zur Sinnbildkunst des XVI. und XVII. Jahrhunderts*. Stuttgart: Metzler, 1996.
- Herbert, George. *The Temple*. Trans. Inge Leimberg. Münster: Waxmann, 2002.
- Holm, Bent. "Shakespeare's Ambiguous Magic in *The Tempest*." *The Renaissance Theatre: Textes, Performance, Design*. Ed. Christopher Cairns. 2 vols. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999. 1: 1-11.
- Horstmann, Ulrich. "Das andere Empire: Viktorianische Lyrik im Schattenreich." *Death-in-Life. Studien zur historischen Entfaltung der Entfremdung in der englischen Literatur*. Ed. Günther Blaicher. Trier: WVT, 1998. 181-92.
- Ide, Richard S. "Macbeth and *The Tempest*: The Dark Side of Prospero's Magic." *Praise Disjoined: Changing Patterns of Salvation in 17<sup>th</sup>-Century English Literature*. Ed. William P. Shaw. New York: Peter Lang, 1991. 103-18.
- Keyser, Elizabeth Lennox. "'Quite Contrary': Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*." *Children's Literature: Annual of the MLA Division on Children's Literature and Children's Literature Association* 11 (1983): 1-13.
- Koppes, Phyllis Bixler. "Tradition and the Individual Talent of Frances Hodgson Burnett." *Children's Literature: An International Journal* 7 (1978): 191-207.

- Kranz, M./Probst, P. "Sympathie." *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*. Ed. Joachim Ritter/Karlfried Gründer. 13 vols. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1998. 10: 751-56.
- Leimberg, Inge. *Heilig Öffentlich Geheimnis: Die geistliche Lyrik der englischen Frühaufklärung*. Münster: Waxmann, 1996.
- Lelle, Diana. "Das Paradox des *Death-in-Life*: Dr. Maud Baileys *postmodern condition* in Antonia S. Byatt's *Roman Possession: A Romance*." *Geschlecht – Literatur – Geschichte I*. Ed. Gudrun Loster-Schneider. St. Ingbert: Röhrig Universitätsverlag, 1999. 235-51.
- Lexikon der Christlichen Ikonographie*. Ed. Wolfgang Braunfels. 6 vols. Freiburg: Herder, 1974. 6: 260-315.
- McCulloch, Fiona. "'I Shall Stop Being Queer [...] if I Go Every Day to the Garden'—Edenic Childhood in *The Secret Garden*." *The Fictional Role of Childhood in Victorian and Early Twentieth Century Children's Literature*. Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen P, 2004. 149-73.
- McGillis, Roderick. "'Secrets' and 'Sequence' in Children's Stories." *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 18.2 (Fall 1985): 35-46.
- Nicolson, Marjorie Hope. *The Breaking of the Circle*. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1950.
- Opie, Iona and Peter, eds. *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes*. Oxford: OUP, 1997.
- Ovid [Publius Ovidius Naso]. *Metamorphoses*. Trans. Frank Justus Miller. 2 vols. London: William Heinemann, 1925.
- Oxford English Dictionary*. Second edition 1989. Online Version September 2011. <http://www.oed.com>.
- Parker, Gail Thain. *Mind Cure in New England: From the Civil War to World War I*. Hanover: UP of New England, 1973.
- Parsons, Linda T. "'Otherways' into the Garden: Re-Visioning the Feminine in *The Secret Garden*." *Children's Literature in Education* 33.4 (Dec 2002): 247-68.
- Peterson, Joseph Martin. *The Dorothea Legend: Its Earliest Records, Middle English Versions, and Influence of Massinger's 'Virgin Martyr'*. Heidelberg: Diss. University of Heidelberg, 1910.
- Plotz, Judith. "Secret Garden II; or *Lady Chatterley's Lover* as Palimpsest." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 19 (1994): 15-19.
- Roxburgh, Stephen D. "'Our first world': Form and meaning in *The Secret Garden*." *Children's Literature in Education* 10.3 (1979): 120-30.
- Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph. "Von der Weltseele – Eine Hypothese der Höheren Physik zur Erklärung des allgemeinen Organismus." 1798. *Werke*. Ed. Jörg Jantzen. 6 vols. Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 2000. 6: 64-272.

- Shakespeare, William. *The Tempest*. Ed. Virginia M. Vaughan/Alden T. Vaughan. London: Thomson, 2000.
- . *The Winter's Tale*. 1963. Ed. J. H. P. Pafford. The Arden Shakespeare. London: Thomson, 2003.
- Spenser, Edmund. *The Faerie Queene*. Ed. Albert C. Hamilton. Harlow: Longman, 2001.
- Stewart, Stanley. *The Enclosed Garden: The Tradition and Image in Seventeenth-Century Poetry*. Madison: The U of Wisconsin P, 1966.
- Stolzenbach, Mary. "Braid Yorkshire: The Language of Myth? An Appreciation of *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett." *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.
- Thwaite, Ann. *Waiting for the Party: The Life of Frances Hodgson Burnett, 1849-1924*. 1974. Boston: David R. Godine, 1991.
- Voragine, Jacobus de. *Legenda Aurea: Das Leben der Heiligen*. Ed. Erich Weidinger. Aschaffenburg: Pattloch, 1986.
- Webb, Jean. "Romanticism vs. Empire in *The Secret Garden*." *Introducing Children's Literature: From Romanticism to Postmodernism*. Ed. Deborah Cogan Thacker/Jean Webb. London: Routledge, 2002. 91-97.
- Wheeler, Michael. *Heaven, Hell, and the Victorians*. Cambridge: CUP, 1994.
- Wilkie, Christine. "Digging up *The Secret Garden*: noble innocents or little savages?" *Children's Literature in Education* 28 (1997): 73-83.
- Zirker, Angelika. "'You can't stay downstairs': Death-in-Life and Life-in-Death in Frances Hodgson Burnett's *In the Closed Room*." *Sprache, Literatur, Kultur: Translatio delectat. Festschrift für Lothar Černý*. Ed. Matthias Bauer/Rüdiger Pfeiffer-Rupp/Claudia Sasse/Ursula Wiene. Münster: LIT, 2011. 157-74.