

*Home is a Matter of  
Blood, Time, and Genre:  
Essentialism in Burnett and McKinley*

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J. D. STAHL'S point that "children's literature [is] one of the most forceful means of acculturation [and] reflects the cultural aims of imperial policy" (50) prompts me to consider what "forceful means of acculturation" children's literature has at its disposal. How can children's literature be imperialistic? What particular kinds of imperial philosophies might children's literature tend to reinforce? Children's texts that actually feature the act of colonialism in the narrative might be best used for answering these questions. How do such texts represent that imperial process to the child reader? What sorts of ideas are the focus in the imperialistic context? More specifically, what conclusions can we draw from the ways authors represent both a cultural "home" and cultural identity to children in different times and in different genres?

Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* (1911) and Robin McKinley's *The Blue Sword* (1982)—two children's novels that portray the colonial condition—illustrate contrasting ways that children's fiction can depict essentialistic differences between peoples and their homes. *The Secret Garden* is a novel of realism written in a time when cultural difference could be equated with biological difference through metaphor in an unselfconscious narrative; *The Blue Sword* employs the genre of fantasy to depict insuperable essentialistic differences between peoples in a postmodern era that requires self-consciousness regarding colonialistic practices. While each book ultimately draws clear boundaries between East and West, *The Blue Sword* begins with an implied challenge to such divisions only to reify them even more forcefully through the use of fantasy. This book

illustrates how children's literature is still a prime site for perpetuating essentialistic dichotomies among cultures, homes, and peoples.

Abdul JanMohamed has examined the ways that colonialist discourse imposes a distinction between cultures in terms of what he calls "Manichean Allegory." JanMohamed defines "Manichean Allegory" as "a field of diverse yet interchangeable oppositions between white and black, good and evil, superiority and inferiority, civilization and savagery, intelligence and emotion, rationality and sensuality, self and Other, subject and object" (82). The colonizer, represented by the first term in each paired set, indoctrinates his own people, consciously or not, in the ways of the colonialist. Literature—an excellent vehicle for perpetuating any ideology—can represent the colonialist binary through "imaginary" or "symbolic" means, JanMohamed argues. The imaginary colonialist text ignores the context in which the native lives and represents the native only in the context of the colonizer's values, and thereby necessarily objectifies the native. To say "native" in the imaginary colonialist text is the same as to say "evil" (85).

The author of the symbolic text, however, is "willing to examine the specific, individual, and cultural differences" between the colonizer and colonized in a self-conscious fashion. The symbolic text shows some measure of reflection regarding the "efficacy" of the colonizer's values (85) and often uses the colonial encounter itself as the subject of the narrative. The symbolic text will take one of two tacks in portraying that encounter: first, the text will represent characters engaged in cultural transcendence which results in a "melting pot" blend of cultures, or, second, it will (as JanMohamed says of Nadine Gordimer and Joseph Conrad) show that syncretism, or synthesis, is "impossible within the power relations of colonial society" (85) because of the deep discursive structures in place. The second type of symbolic text is different from the imaginary text in that the former is self-conscious about its own complicity in the colonial scene and attributes the failure to those cultural and discursive factors rather than to some inexplicable, essentialistic condition. However, it is only the self-conscious or self-aware text—the

symbolic text—which has a chance of freeing the reader from the Manichean allegory through making it visible. The classic home/away dichotomy is one context for Manichean allegory in colonialist texts for children. When we consider the way each protagonist in these two novels thinks about and reacts to the idea of home, we see how the home is linked to racial essentialism. In both *The Secret Garden* and *The Blue Sword*, home is connected to issues of blood; the concept of blood, in turn, is represented through the metaphors of magic and disease in each book that mark the essential and insuperable divisions between cultures. While *The Secret Garden* is clearly an “imaginative” text, *The Blue Sword* seems to be a more complicated case than JanMohamed’s system accounts for. *The Blue Sword* self-consciously reaches the conclusion about the racial insuperability of people. As fantasy, however, *The Blue Sword* can be a self-conscious contemporary text that claims essential differences without running the risk of condemnation. Such is the power of fantasy.

*The Secret Garden* and *The Blue Sword* argue that “home” is not necessarily the house in which one was born and raised; “home” is the home of one’s people. The narrator of *The Secret Garden* describes Mary Lennox’s change in setting from India to England as a return home despite the fact that Mary has never before lived in England. The text never questions Mary’s “natural” relationship to England as “home,” and the reader is unlikely to challenge the unselfconscious narrative. The narrator serves as the voice of unquestioned truth and authority in its third-person position: “The fact was that the fresh wind from the moor had begun to blow the cobwebs out of [Mary’s] young brain and to waken her up a little” (51). The reassuring phrase “the fact was” provides us with indisputable narrative truth. The narrator goes on to attribute Mary’s improved condition to her change in physical environment:

Never, never had Mary dreamed of a sky so blue. In India skies were hot and blazing. . . . The far-reaching world of the moor looked softly blue instead of gloomy purple-black or awful dreary gray. . . . In India she had always been too hot and languid and weak to care much about anything, but in this place she was beginning to care and to do

new things . . . [and there was] no doubt that the fresh, strong, pure air from the moor had a great deal to do with it.

(64, 72; emphasis added)

The physical influence of India itself is blamed for many of Mary's physical and emotional woes. The narrator describes England as "fresh" and India as "languid" and encourages an equation between "Blue" and "England" as well as between "Gray" and "India"—colors replete with cultural associations. These value-laden descriptions go far toward persuading the reader to feel relief that Mary has "escaped" the land in which she was born and raised but which is clearly not home. Mary later qualifies her neutral observation that "India is quite different from Yorkshire" (73) when she states that she "never liked it in India" (117), though until that week she had nothing with which to compare it. But Mary has not come to England for the first time; she has "returned" somehow; she comes home to the place to which she has never been. Home, it appears, is in the blood tie to some place and people, and one must have this blood awakened through purposeful interaction with one's own race and in that race's ancestral home.

Despite the strong observations that environment is to blame for Mary's decline, three strong narrative voices argue that the Indians themselves constitute Mary's trouble in India. Martha attributes Mary's condition to the fact that "there's such a lot of blacks there instead o' respectable white people" (33);<sup>1</sup> Mary screams at Martha: "You thought I was a native! You dared! You don't know anything about natives! They are not people—they're servants who must salaam to you" (33). The narrator reinforces the dichotomy between the human English and the mechanical, robot-like Indian with amused derision:

The native servants were always saying ["it was the custom"]. If one told them to do a thing their ancestors had not done for a thousand years they gazed at one mildly and said, "It is not the custom," and one knew that was the end of the matter. (33)

We have it from three different narrative voices that the "natives" are not respectable, intelligent, nor even people. The English represent respectability, intelligence, flexibility, and, therefore, humanity. Mary's illness, despite the insistence of the three nar-

rative voices, is not simply the result of being around non-people or of being “home”; rather the combination of being in the wrong land with the wrong people triggers a biological response: illness. This is homesickness in its most extreme manifestation. One needs to be in contact with one’s own kind and in one’s blood-homeland.<sup>2</sup>

*The Blue Sword* is the story of Harry (a diminutive of “Harriet”), a young woman from “Homeland” whose brother is a soldier stationed in the Eastern Colonial Province of Daria. Following the death of her father, Harry goes to the Darian outpost to be with her brother Richard. Harry finds herself drawn to the hills in an inexplicable way shortly after arriving in Daria. Corlath, King of the Hillfolk, kidnaps Harry and trains her to be a warrior who assumes the new name of “Harimad-Sol.” The story centers on Harry’s subsequent attempts to function as a bridge between two cultures.<sup>3</sup> *The Blue Sword*, then, also illustrates the results of being in the wrong place and with the wrong people. *The Blue Sword*, like *The Secret Garden*, reinforces a hierarchy based on land and the people—though with more interesting implications as a work published seven decades after *The Secret Garden*, and belonging to a different genre.

One character in *The Blue Sword* observes that Darrians who live in the “Homelander” outpost “do work for you, or with you, [and] are very eager to prove how Homelander they really are, and loyal to all things Homelander” (27). These “natives” are products of the hegemonic forces at work over a long-time occupation and have themselves internalized the binary of superior/inferior, much as the “domesticated” Indians of Burnett’s novel have. The Darrians are “infected” by the Homelanders on the outpost despite being “home” in Daria; Darrians, it seems, are easily dispossessed of their own home because of the intoxicating presence of the Homelanders. The Homelanders, by contrast, deal well enough in a completely different “atmosphere” because they are among a concentrated number of the “right” people, though they are clearly not unaffected by being in Daria. The Homelanders are clearly a heartier, more versatile race—as a colonist must be. Even the Homelanders, however, must stay with their own kind to stay strong; as Mary found the combina-

tion of being surrounded by her Indian servants and being in India debilitating, neither the Homelanders nor the Darrians can afford to be both in the wrong place *and* with the wrong folks.

Harry's adventures in *The Blue Sword* seem to suggest that the two cultures may not be separated by an unbridgeable gulf, in contrast to the message of *The Secret Garden*. *The Blue Sword* seems to be hopeful regarding cultural syncretism; after all, if one could overcome the exaggerated racial divisions in fantasy, it seems to say, then *any* cultural obstacle in our own world is paltry in comparison. Harry manages to be both with the Other and in the "wrong" atmosphere and yet both stay healthy and begin paving the way toward cultural syncretism. *The Blue Sword* may become, with the building of Harry as "bridge," the kind of symbolic text that is self-conscious of its depiction of Manichean allegory through the colonial act but which points to the possibility of cultural syncretism.

While she is still in Homeland, Harry gets her first taste of the Homeland's "Royal Province of Daria" (7) through what is undoubtedly colonialist discourse: "some of [the colonial situation] Harry had read about at Home when she had first heard of [her brother] Richard's posting" (McKinley 7). Her description of the yet unseen Corlath (King of the Hillfolk) as "barbarian king" (16) is evidence of her acceptance of colonialist discourse. She expects the Hillfolk's king to be what a daughter of a colonizing race would expect from the colonized: an inferior, troublesome barbarian who stands in the way of "progress." The colonizer, Abdul JanMohamed tells us, is "in possession of the colonized" through discursive practices "neither ambiguous nor ambivalent" (78). Because of this discursive foundation of Manichean allegory Harry's "conversion" toward cultural self-consciousness is an even more marvellous event. A move toward cultural syncretism seems to win out over intense cultural training to the contrary. McKinley seems to suggest that it is possible for people of one culture to adapt to, interact with, and embrace a different culture without having to assume the role of either protective "parent" or dispossessed "children." Despite the Darrians at the Outpost having to assume that role of "children," the book uses Harry's experience to suggest that at least one group is capable of

beginning a process that would result in both cultural parity and blending, even if it begins on the Homelander's terms.

As Harry excels in her new world she finds that she is something of a "world bridge" between the lands and their people. Rather than "going native," she becomes a self-conscious alembic between societies. In her "two worlds meet" (164). She notices that the metaphor of a bridge is itself culturally specific: "Perhaps she was a better-constructed bridge than she had realized; and she thought of beams and girders, and almost laughed; how Outlanderish an image that was, to be sure" (191). Not only does she display a self-consciousness that is beyond Mary's in *The Secret Garden*, she also makes the observation while labeling the Homelander's "Outlanders," a word the Hillfolk use to describe their "visitors." There seems to be hope for the colonizers; they can develop empathy for another culture as well as become self-conscious of their own all on the way toward cultural transcendence. This hero can lead the cultures together. Even her new Darian name, "Harimad-Sol," is a blend of her old name with a new one.

Harry begins to get confused about home in several early instances. When she had first been kidnapped and was among the Darrians for only a short time, she "wished she [was] home, and she was so tired she wasn't sure where home was" (56). Her confusion continues: she wonders, "Did she want to go back? What did she have to go back to?" (76); she finds it difficult "to say what exactly she was homesick for: the Homeland seemed long past" (82); she discovers "a reality to her new life that her old life had lacked" (83), and this makes her feel "isolated, as though her childhood hadn't really happened—or at least hadn't happened as she remembered it. Perhaps she'd always lived in the hills" (205).

Harry is suited well for her role as "culture bridge" not because of her exceptional qualities as a hero who can pioneer and champion cultural syncretism; she is the right person for the job because of one simple but necessary qualification: her great-grandmother (her mother's mother's mother, to be precise) was a high-ranking woman in the Darian kingdom. She, in other words, is part Darian. Hers is a genetic rather than a moral or

cultural compass. She finds that “it did not matter in what world she belonged if both worlds were marching in step” (189) only because she is “admitted” to both worlds already and automatically through blood. It does not take long before she finds herself attracted to the desert, as Jack Dedham is, wishing to “cross the desert and climb into the mountains in the east, the mountains no Homelander had ever climbed” (19). Dedham’s wish is romantic in nature; Harry’s is genetic. Harry acknowledges that “the desert lured her as her own green land never had” (19)—a land less her own than she had thought. She is no symbol of a potential syncretic culture except as a symbol of the necessity of interbreeding to accomplish that goal. Mixture might be possible on the biological level of the individual in *The Blue Sword*, but not on the cultural level of “pure” and different peoples. This issue of race or blood is where *The Blue Sword*, for all its work in providing a view of colonialism that encourages cross-cultural relationships, remains a text that consciously maintains racial essentialities as the most important difference—just as *The Secret Garden* does unconsciously. We do not find out about Harry’s lineage until late in the novel, however. The novel makes a slow transition from a definition of “home” that is cultural and allows for a person’s growing sense of self in relation to the rest of humanity to the restricted vision of home as predestined by the play of blood in the veins. McKinley invites the reader to consider home in larger terms throughout Harry’s “awakening” only to suggest by the end of the novel that what had seemed a matter of social awareness is really only biological recognition. Blood determines home.

The two texts discuss blood difference between peoples in terms of magic and disease. Magic in *The Secret Garden* is as culturally specific and, by extension, as racially specific as *kelar*—the power of healing, Sight, and battle rage that is directly linked to Harry’s lineage in *The Blue Sword*. The magic is not associated with anything racial in an overt way; it does, however, connect to a racially singular culture. Though Mary had heard about magic from her Ayah in India, she never “experienced” it until, like Harry, she reached her “blood” home (78) and became one of the “magicians in the garden” (181). Magic is not “black. It’s as

white as snow" (226), which implies not only the same Manichean allegory for goodness that marks the native as "unrespectable," but is also a Christian binary for good and evil—and Christianity is a big part of magic. When Dickon's mother enters the garden near the end of the novel she is singing the doxology, prompting Colin to say: "It is a very nice song. . . . I like it. Perhaps it means just what I mean when I want to shout out that I am thankful to the Magic" (261). The group sings the song over several times, transforming the garden into a sort of cathedral and the singers into the overt worshippers of a culturally specific and racially exclusive "magic."

Magic in *The Blue Sword* is associated more directly with biology, and therefore necessarily becomes a cultural demarcation. The Home(Out)landers believe that the ancient Darrians were "sorcerers" (14). Upon hearing about Corlath's "magic," the political attaché to the outpost remarks: "'Oh, magic,' said Sir Charles disgustedly, but there was a trace of uneasiness in his voice as well" (15). The magic is inscrutable and, like the natives, also beyond administration. The magic in *The Secret Garden* stays culturally specific but racially singular by implication; magic in *The Blue Sword* is a direct biological property attributed to the natives. The equation of essential qualities of blood with magic is what JanMohamed would call the fetishization of the Other:

Characteristics and habits with which the colonialist endows the native are . . . not presented as the products of social and cultural difference but as characteristics inherent in the race—in the "blood"—of the native. In its extreme form, this kind of fetishization transmutes all specificity and difference into a magical essence.

(86)

"Magic" is the ultimate manifestation of division between races in each book, either through cultural association with race or through a direct connection to race itself. What may seem to be in *The Blue Sword* a celebration of difference, showing the Hill-folk as possibly "stronger" than the Homelander, is merely another way to ensure the Darrians' identity as Other and the Homelander's identity as "like us readers" who also lack this magic.

Burnett and McKinley each discuss the differences in "blood" in terms of disease as well; the difference in blood inspires

infection as well as magic. The narrator tells us, with more unchallengeable cause-and-effect reasoning, that Mary's "hair was yellow, and her face was yellow *because she had been born in India* and had always been ill in one way or another" (9; emphasis added). Mary, as a full-blooded English girl, seems to be sick with the contagion "India" rather than with the cholera that killed her parents and servants. The simple solution that serves as Colin's cure for being shut in—the fresh air of the moor and exercise—is also the remedy for Mary's physical atrophy experienced in India. Neither physical nor cultural confinement is a genetically inherited "disease," but one must live in the environment suited to one's biological make-up. India is as unnatural an environment for an English child as being shut in is unnatural for any otherwise healthy child. However, "savage little Mary" (172) goes through a double "recovery" in England—recovery from the contact with a "diseased" Other in an alien atmosphere. She tells her guardian that she is "getting fatter and fatter everyday. . . . Martha says [her] hair is growing thicker. It isn't so flat and stringy" (163). We are also given the good news that England makes Mary hungry, a sure sign that she's getting "well" (117).

Harry in *The Blue Sword* is one-eighth Darian—and strong blood it must be to so overwhelm the seven-eighths Homelander blood. Any bit of "contagion" will poison the rest, after all. Jack Dedham warns her about Daria: "It's a strange country, . . . and if it gets too much in your blood it makes you strange too" (24). Dedham seems to speak metaphorically, though we have seen that it *is* either disease contracted from the Other or the effects of atmospheric poison that is at work here. Through Harry, McKinley provides us with the another manifestation of Dedham's warning. There will be a limit to which Dedham, or any pure "Outlander," can become inured to these conditions, much less immune. Harry, however, is able to swim in either gene pool, though her blood seems to prefer Daria. Harry's mixed blood makes her immune to the enervating, dispiriting effects of this "culture disease" or "atmosphere sickness" that both Mary Lennox and the outpost Darrians experience. At first, Harry/Harimad-Sol thinks of her gift of magic, *kelar*, as any Homelander might: "She wondered if swordsmanship, like riding a war-

stallion and speaking a language strange to her, was suddenly going to awaken in her blood like a disease" (93). Harry's blood has abilities to "awaken" culturally specific abilities—not only psychic powers like the Sight (72) that makes others ill to even attempt using, but the language that she automatically knows when she is in a *kelar* rage. The old expression "it's in her blood" is extrapolated in this McKinley fantasy. Not much later Harry "no longer thought about it as a disease" (102). She rejects the metaphor of disease along with the attendant cultural hierarchy it implies.

Interestingly, blood is what unites the Homelander with the Darian on one very important level: it is *human* blood—as McKinley decides to designate the type. Darrians and Homelanders seem less different in this regard than do Mary and her Ayah, according to Mary's observations on humanity quoted above. In McKinley's story, the Northerners, those threatening both Homelander and Hillfolk, are less than human, literally. The Northern leader is "human" with "a little nonhuman blood" mixed in (43). In other words, McKinley introduces a group so different in kind from either Homelander or Darian that the two groups previously seen as different in kind now seem merely different by degree. While still different in culture, the properties of blood that have separated them appear to be negligible when compared to the truly "alien" Northerners. The arrival of the Northerners suggests that blood is thicker than environment in this story, reinforcing the novel's implied message. Mathin, Harry's teacher, makes this human connection overt when he tells her, "you Outlanders are human . . . as the Northerners are not" (141). McKinley has, near the end of the novel, tried to redefine what constitutes an important difference in blood by introducing an Other who is beyond Other by being truly alien.

Nonetheless, it is blood that matters, and the Darrians and Homelanders *are* "different" in blood. Despite what may seem to have been a plot diversion regarding what is *truly* different, the blood gulf between Homelander and Darian will still exist even when the extreme alien is defeated—and this proves to be the case. Blood, and its attending metaphors of "disease" and "purity," remains the defining concept of self in *The Blue Sword*.

McKinley chooses to mark the possibly infinite continuum of Otherness on a biological scale and not on a scale of cultural variation, trapping the Homelanders and Darrians in an imaginary text and, therefore, on either side of an unbridgeable gap. JanMohamed tells us that “instead of seeing the native as a bridge toward syncretic possibility, [the colonialist] uses him as a mirror that reflects the colonialist’s self image” (84). Harry can serve only as a mirror for each of the two groups, reflecting the possibilities inherent in mixing blood, but not as a bridge between cultures who come short of sharing that biological link.

Despite the advent of diplomatic relations between Daria and the Outland outpost, *The Blue Sword* ends with a clear and lasting division between peoples. Jack Dedham, Homelander expatriate at the end of their own “War of Northern Aggression,” makes the playful observation to Harry that “we Outlanders must stick together” (245). Harry corrects him: “No—we who love the Hills must stick together” (245). Whether or not this statement is meant as a rebuke, it clearly draws blood lines in the desert sand. Jack is a sort of aberration in his being drawn to the hills of Daria, for he is not Darian; and he is also no longer a Homelander, for he is listed as “lost in action” by the Homeland outpost commander as a gesture of saving face. While blood makes Harry part of both worlds, Jack is now a member of neither. Jack’s aberrant condition is that his blood is linked to the wrong place. Daria and the Outlander outpost remain tolerant of each other only. The novel makes it clear that such a character will necessarily be dispossessed. While the blood-land connection makes successful colonization ultimately impossible in *The Blue Sword* (and simply unattractive in *The Secret Garden*), the opportunity for different groups to have any kind of purposeful life in juxtaposition with each other seems forfeited also. The essential difference kills the colonialism in these worlds as well as any argument for genocide (who can live on the land even if the other is exterminated?), but along with that goes any chance for world community.

JanMohamed argues that “a number of subgenres that are always based on the Manichean allegory” includes “the adventure story . . . about Europeans battling dark, evil forces” (90); perhaps the differences between realism and fantasy point to

ways the Manichean allegory is perpetuated in other genres as well. *The Secret Garden* is clearly an "imaginative" text, as JanMohamed defines it; *The Blue Sword*, however, seems to be a generic adaptation for a kind of "imaginative" text in an era in which society is self-conscious about the colonialist implications for cultural and racial difference. *The Blue Sword* displays self-consciousness about culturally-determined difference, as shown above, but uses the genre of fantasy as a way to justify the impossibility of syncretism on the basis of biology. What today would be an unacceptable world-view in realistic fiction (*The Secret Garden* was published in 1911, after all) can be made legitimate in a genre that is expected to pose "thought experiments" like the one McKinley proposes. McKinley employs fantasy to create the same "imaginative" effect realism could achieve in Burnett's time. McKinley avoids the criticism that would necessarily follow her use of realism for the same ends, however. *The Blue Sword* begins by seeming to be that first type of symbolic text since it argues for a cultural syncretism that ignores the discursive divisiveness of the Manichean allegory, but then the novel seems to develop into the second type of symbolic text in its recognition of deep discursive cultural divisions; ultimately the novel relies on an implicit "imaginative" situation that uses biology to create insurmountable "cultural" divisions. Rather than deciding that syncretism is either possible or impossible based on the relative depth and intractability of the discursive structures of colonialism, McKinley claims essentialism as the reason for cultural division in her fantasy world.

Perry Nodelman observes that when we write to an audience that we believe "doesn't yet know what we wish it to understand, we [will] always speak to [that] audience in an attempt to speak for it—to colonize it with our own perceptions of things, including itself" (34); Nodelman argues that "child psychology and children's literature are imperialist activities" (33) for this reason. McKinley's novel of colonialization opens up new issues regarding the role of fantasy in "colonizing" the reader. Children's literature itself is a narrative commentary to children—for children—about what home is and why.

Ursula Le Guin's concern about "fake realism" (37) and C. S. Lewis's about the "superficially realistic" (215) are similar and

can be summed up as follows: some unrealistic plots that are set in the “real world” are potentially more psychologically dangerous for the young reader than fantasy is because the young reader can be fooled into thinking such “realism” is an accurate reflection of how the world works. I argue that fantasy can be dangerous in a way similar to “fake realism” when it employs extreme biological Otherness in an ahistorical and apolitical setting as a means for arguing for cultural division. If Matt Christopher’s books can make a fifth-grader believe that hitting the game-winning homer is an acceptable expectation in life, Robin McKinley’s fiction can persuade a fifth-grader to accept biology as an acceptable reason for insuperable cultural difference; we can draw either conclusion from the respective novels unconsciously, after all. Both representations provide young readers with dubious explanations for the way the world works, and each does so just as covertly as the other. Students’ earliest encounters with fiction will remain powerful determinations for how they construct their personal and political homes.

## NOTES

- 1 Martha’s view of “blacks” is most interesting since it is the *product* of colonialist discourse, not merely an example of it—as evidenced by her hope of seeing the exotic little black girl (as she assumed Mary to be) and of her desire to “know” more, for her family “wanted to know all about th’ blacks an’ about th’ ship [Mary] came in. [Martha] couldn’t tell ’em enough” (73). Mary promises to contribute more colonialist discourse for Martha when she says that she’ll “tell [her] a great deal more before [her] next day out” (73), for Mary had “lived with the heathen” (77). Interestingly, this is a child colonizing the views of an adult regarding race and culture. The top-down hierarchy here is usually in terms of age (old to young), gender (man to woman), and race (white to black), but economic class (upper to lower) takes over here. Martha is a good deal older than Mary, but the former is infantilized due to class, not age.
- 2 The novel makes it seem unlikely that a young Indian “heathen” would be “cured” of hot, gloomy India in England. Indians do not behave the way they do simply because they are in India, in other words. England is not a cultural or biological panacea for all races, despite what the colonists might assume about what their English thinking can do for the “children” of other nations. While to be “home” seems to mean being in the home of one’s race, there are certain races who do not benefit much from being there. What the novel implies, then, is not only an essentialistic division between races, but a clear hierarchy based on that difference. Despite the argument posed above, however, *The Secret Garden* cannot provide us with a clear answer to the question of whether it is the rarefied air of England, the special environment-blood “match,” or a combination of both that is necessary for vitality in England since we never do see an Indian in England. As tempting as it is, I cannot argue that Burnett’s system would have the languid Indian perish after

experiencing the super-charged air of England even though it certainly seems that way in the world of this novel. Ram Dass in *The Little Princess* does manage to survive in the rarefied air of England, for instance. I am not suggesting, however, that Burnett maintains a consistent system across imaginary texts; inconsistency, arguably, is one of the effects of a lack of self-consciousness regarding one's role as a colonialist.

- <sup>3</sup> See my earlier discussion of Harry as a "world bridge" ("The Illusion of Control" 16-19, 31).

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