

## **‘I Will Do What My Ayah Used to Do’: The Ayah as a Site of Imperial Resistance in *The Secret Garden***

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### **Introduction**

British occupation in nineteenth-century India presented vexing problems for Britain even as it augmented the empire’s colonial power: as much as it relied on its colony, the metropole was unsettled by its dependence on the colony. Chief among metropolitan anxieties was the perceived threat the colonies and their people posed to European homogeneity. The employment of Indian women servants to rear children of British families in India, a significant aspect of colonial motherhood, lays bare the essence of this imperial malaise: despite their need for Indian nursemaids (ayahs) and wet nurses (ammahs), British families preserved their prejudice against them. Nupur Chaudhuri writes that British families (particularly British mothers, who offloaded reproductive care to ayahs) feared that their children would adopt their ayahs’ “native” customs and language (1988, 530). The Indianization of British children at the hand of domestic servants was seen not only as a cultural but also a moral predicament. Some British critics went so far as to claim that ammahs’ breastmilk would morally defile any British infant who consumes it (Chaudhuri 1988, 528-529). In the view of these critics, the transmission of culture and morality from Indian domestic servants to British children could thus be characterized as

pathological. In line with Edward Said's theorization of Orientalism, the British empire can be said to have produced an ostensibly stable self-identity by distinguishing itself from the racialized "Other"—the Indian colony (1979, 2-3); however, the empire's reliance on Indian women's domestic labor, a source of its fortification and thus its self-image as the metropole, threatened to destabilize the distinction that produced the identity of the metropole in the first place.

Colonial racial anxieties ignite burning questions. What exactly ensues when a British child, who has long been raised and Indianized by native women servants, enters the metropole? Can the Anglo-Indian child, once again (if slowly), be anglicized by entering European land, or does the child bring the colonized land and culture with them, at once remaining unaltered and altering Europe? Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* offers a rich site for deconstructing the metropole's racial anxieties regarding maternal care provided by colonial subjects. The novel follows a young Anglo-Indian girl named Mary Lennox, who loses her parents and ayah to cholera and leaves India to live at her uncle's estate in England, where she is cured of her listlessness and achieves vigor. I turn my attention to a Victorian children's novel that—despite centering on an Anglo-Indian child and beginning her story with her relationship with her ayah—has not produced much critical scholarship on the novel's depiction of ayahs. While several scholars have analyzed the novel's imperial themes, their attention has primarily been fixed upon either British society or India rather than its native woman servants.<sup>1</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, in referencing *The Secret Garden* as a fictional application of her scholarship on race and colonialism, provides a crucial starting point for this missing work, from which I hope to continue in this paper (1995, 149). Otherwise, beyond the novel, too, the ayah has been overlooked. Satya Shikha Chakraborty argues that the historical caricaturization of the ayah obfuscated her lived experiences as a caregiver (2025, 1-34). Arunima Datta, who writes about traveling ayahs, articulates the invisibility of ayahs in historical records due to the enduring public neglect of their labor and insists that the history of traveling ayahs matters for it reveals their efforts to

demand better treatment from British institutions (2023, 2-5). In order to address the gap in scholarship on ayahs in Burnett's novel, I rely on analyses of race, illness, and disability to examine how Mary's ayah, first embodied as an Indian servant and eventually in Mary's own caregiving, is read through the language of (dis)ability as first debilitating and later fortifying the white bourgeois family. I suggest that, while Mary's ayah has a cursory and seemingly inconsequential presence, she reemerges through Mary's body and actions later in the novel, significantly influencing the organization of the narrative and the arc of its protagonist. The unnamed ayah, whose absence is apparently longer than her actual brief presence, inhabits a site of resistance in the novel, bringing into focus the novel's racial imagination and challenging colonial notions of disease, disability, and race. The ayah unsettles the linear narrative that associates Mary with wellness only because of her newfound proximity to the metropole. In light of my argument, I consider the crucial role gendered native servitude and care, an overlooked aspect of colonialism in *The Secret Garden*, plays in race- and nation-building. That ayahs are active agents rather than passive participants in the text is a call that they must, accordingly, be discussed critically in scholarship.

### **Colonial Motherhood, Domestic Servitude, and Racial Anxieties**

Indian domestic servants appeared to challenge British women's control over their household. Indrani Sen articulates that the "colonial home" was considered a "microcosm of the empire" where British women (memsahibs) reproduced imperial power dynamics with their Indian domestic servants (2009, 324). However, these servants were a source of anxiety as they unsettled the memsahib's power over the household due to their proximity to the memsahib's children, the "next generation of imperial rulers" (Sen 2009, 324). The result was a power struggle British women faced as they desired a clearer hierarchy between themselves and their female domestic servants and, importantly, greater influence over their own Indian-born British children.

In addition to threatening power relations with memsahibs, ayahs and ammahs raised anxieties about the purported contamination of British children's racial purity and their loss of national identity. One explanation for this is that the native woman servant was seen as analogous to India in the British imaginary. As if the possibility of their children's adoption of their ayahs' "native" customs and language did not already challenge colonial notions of ostensible white racial and cultural purity (Chaudhuri 1988, 530), British mothers feared the Indianization of their children especially when the mothers themselves did not understand Indian languages, a dynamic that made their children doubly foreign to them. Stoler takes the analysis of this colonial rationality a step further by emphasizing colonialism's role in European constructions of race and sexuality. In one part of her argument, she explains that European children, reared in colonized lands by native wet nurses and other domestic servants like ayahs, troubled European critics precisely because native caregivers allegedly corrupted the children's moral character—that is, their Europeanness: "Proximity to the world of native servants led to individual and racial degeneracy, personal and political disaffection and identification" (1995, 159). Stoler applies this concept to expand Michel Foucault's scholarship on how Western notions of sexuality enforce societal control and suggests that if Western anxieties about children's purportedly unnatural sexual "proclivities" existed, this anxiety was reserved for children outside the metropole (as well as children who were native or of mixed race; Stoler 1995, 156; Foucault 1978, 45). It was, after all, these children who were raised by "maternally inept native women," a distinction that was predicated on race as it also included women who were mixed, creole, and nativized Europeans (Stoler 1995, 160). As such, the British child's closeness to the native woman servant implied the child's closeness to India, which also bespoke the child's distance from their British mother and Europe. This distance, critics insinuated, eradicated the child's loyalty to Europe, threatening the collapse of their "racial and national identity" by vitiating, the larger "bourgeois white" class and its contributions to

colonial nation-building (Stoler 1995, 163-164). Born within the anxiety of colonial motherhood, the cultural “archetype” of the ayah—racialized and, in many ways, desexualized—was, as Chakraborty claims, the antithesis of the British mother and supplied a justification of the ostensible superiority of British imperialism and white racial and sexual purity (2025, 1-34). Taken this way, British mothers are as analogous to the metropole as ayahs and ammahs are to India. But, as it turns out, British mothers are not completely impervious to the effects of the colony. Because “cultural contagions could seep through the well-heeled European colonial household” (Stoler 1995, 159), British mothers with proximity to domestic servants in the colony were considered threats to the homogenous European body politic by the state power of the metropole; likewise, poor British mothers, being “déclassé European colonials” were also grouped in this category of “internal enemies” against whom society had to be protected (Stoler 1995, 93, 159). British motherhood was largely suspect by virtue of British women’s presence in the colony and absence from the metropole. These perceived “internal enemies” bespeak how deeply the racialization of the colony goes and how highly metropolitan anxieties soar with regard to the colony and its domestic servants.

The racialization of ayahs and ammahs is not the only way in which they were characterized as “bad” mother figures whose caregiving produced “bad” children. Indian native women servants were also implicitly and explicitly maligned using the language of illness. Chaudhuri writes that British doctors claimed that the “Indian climate was too debilitating for new [British] mothers to breast-feed their children” and thus urged British mothers to rely on ammahs (Chaudhuri 1988, 528-529). Even as ammahs were indispensable for the survival of the British infant by preventing their malnourishment, the racial hierarchy that placed the British mother above the ammah characterized the ammah as still inferior for being healthy enough to breast-feed. Her acclimation to the “Indian climate” can thus be read as abnormal and unhealthy. In fact, some British critics went as far as to

claim that ammahs' breastmilk would morally defile any British infant who consumes it (1988, 528-529). These speculations were fueled largely because ammahs, like other domestic servants, were of a lower socioeconomic class. Breastmilk is then understood not dissimilarly to a disease, as the former ostensibly transferred a kind of sickness (when, in reality, breastmilk is more akin to medicine due to its life-saving potential). Ayahs, too, were subject to medicalized scrutiny. Anglo-Indian parents feared that their children's living in India's "climate and environment" for an extensive period might permanently "weaken their [children's] constitution" (Chaudhuri 1988, 532-533). If the ayah, like the ammah, could withstand the Indian climate and environment, the colonial white supremacist logic suggests it is because she has a corrupt constitution, for no English person could remain in India without becoming physically ill and morally impure. Purity is, of course, understood synonymously with Europeaness. Robert McRuer's musings on disability are useful for grappling with this medicalized racism. Writing that the "system of compulsory able-bodiedness" is what "produces disability," McRuer suggests compulsory able-bodiedness is a default identity that necessitates normative bodily functions, rendering bodies that function differently to be marked overtly as disabled (2006, 2). Following McRuer in connecting compulsory able-bodiedness with other forms of hegemony that produce marginality—compulsory heterosexuality, for instance, is read as a generator of queerness — I am interested in applying compulsory able-bodiedness to race. In the case of British imperialist presence in India, a compulsory whiteness whose hallmark is able-bodiedness engenders Indianness as a disability. Turning to fictional depictions of this phenomenon, I yoke McRuer's scholarship on disability, Chaudhuri's historiography of colonial motherhood, and Stoler's work on race and colonialism to demonstrate how racialized pathology is represented through Mary and her ayah in *The Secret Garden*.

### **The Racialization and Pathologization of Mary and Her Ayah**

Mary's ayah is a figure who purportedly spoils Mary into incompetence. Upon Mary's first encounter with Martha, a servant at her uncle's manor,

Martha expresses disbelief when Mary confesses she cannot dress herself. When Mary explains that her ayah had been responsible for dressing her, Martha says,

Well, it's time tha' should learn. Tha' cannot begin younger. It'll do thee good to wait on thysen a bit. My mother always said she couldn't see why grand people's children didn't turn out fair fools—what with nurses an' bein' washed an' dressed an' took out to walk as if they was puppies! (Burnett 1911, 32-33).

Martha expostulates with Mary that her overdependence is a dangerous ill and that she must change for the better. Her dialogue is punctuated with references to (under)development (“time,” “younger,” and “turn out”), suggesting that Mary cannot become or progress as a capable, independent individual if she does nothing about her regressive state. Even the term “wait on,” which references an attendance to someone or something, evokes a sense of time because of the homonym “wait.” An equally implicit reference to time is extant in Martha’s imagination of the ayah’s labor, which consists of a series of actions that are completed in the service of a *young* dog. However, the reference to a young animal versus a human infant emphasizes Mary’s degraded condition (at least in the eyes of Martha). This critique only heightens the necessity for Mary’s improvement. Martha’s advice to Mary reads like a doctor’s prescription as it is peppered with dictates and urgent language (“always,” “cannot,” and “should”). It is as though Martha is describing a life-saving operation, lest Mary’s chronic “illness” progress to a terminal one, too. The urgency of time is also present in the colonial anxieties Chaudhuri describes—Anglo-Indian parents feared that prolonged exposure to India’s climate and environment may permanently damage their child’s physical and moral makeup (1988, 528-530). Although Mary leaves India and takes residence in England, Martha’s directives suggest that Mary carries within her all that she absorbed in India.

If this sounds like a description of a contagion, it is because it is not far off. Just as Mary's disposition is subject to pathologization, so too is her appearance. In the same interaction, Martha later reveals to Mary that she expected the girl to be black after learning Mary was arriving from India. Martha describes her surprise upon seeing Mary: "An' there you was, no more black than me—for all you're so yeller" (Burnett 1911, 34). Martha compares Mary to herself because of her yellow skin: Mary is no more black than (or is just as yellow as) Martha. The fixation on Mary's skin color degrades Mary's status in the racial and class hierarchy to that of the servant Martha. Whether characterized as black or yellow, Mary is classified as inherently inferior to white bourgeois Europeans.<sup>2</sup> Further, Mary's connection with Martha echoes her connection to her native Indian servant. Although the narrator's and Martha's descriptions are centered on Mary, they are predicated on her proximity to her (late) ayah who not only dies of disease (cholera) but also has a "dark" face (Burnett 1911, 2). Skin color, a site where race and disease are expected to manifest, is thus deployed to characterize natives of India and their associates as infected and infectious. Martha's expectations of and for Mary's race are also imbued with connotations of illness because they parallel the omniscient narrator's pathologizing musings. When Mary lives in India, she is described as sallow-faced; other descriptions more explicitly evoke disease ("ill in one way or another," sickly," and "ugly"; Burnett 1911, 1). Here, Mary's Indianness is conflated with illness. Elsewhere, whiteness connotes wellness. When Martha initially disapproves of Mary's ineptitude for getting dressed, she dovetails moral character ("good" and "fair") with the upper-class's affluence ("grand") and white beauty standards ("fair"). Race is used to simultaneously disease Mary—and her ayah—and elevate Mary's imagined better self.

In contrast, Mary's cousin Colin's disability is conceptualized differently in the novel: his use of a wheelchair is not associated with purported racial impurity. Alexandra Valint argues that Colin's wheelchair not only highlights his disability but also his "well-to-do"

background, namely his upper-class status and thus his ready access to resources, such as medical providers and servants who might push his wheelchair (2016, 266). Colin, a white boy born and raised in England, is a foil to Mary, an Anglo-Indian girl born and raised in India until her arrival in England; unlike Mary, Colin is not taken care of by an ayah and is instead attended by a family doctor and the plausibly white housekeeper Mrs. Medlock. His disability then is not attributed to his race, as it is with Mary. Instead, descriptions of Colin and his illness portray him in an unbecoming light—as a hypochondriac and emasculated boy (Valint 2016, 268)—his whiteness characterizes his disability such that it reveals his privileged status. Here, whiteness, even when it is not overtly associated with wellness, contrasts with the degraded racialized Indian ayah and her subsequently degraded Indianized dependent Mary.

Just as Chaudhuri suggests the ayah is racialized and diseased to become an analog to India, India becomes an analog to the ayah. This relationship is clear when the effects of the English countryside on Mary are described:

There is no doubt that the fresh, strong, pure air from the moor ... had given her an appetite, and fighting with the wind had stirred her blood, so the same things had stirred her mind. In India she had always been too hot and languid and weak to care much about anything, but in this place she was beginning to care and to want to do new things” (Burnett 1911, 86).

Mary, in short, undergoes a kind of rebirth upon settling in the metropole. Indeed, Mary’s rebirth entails the anglicization of her physique and character, whereby she, to use McRuer’s terms, embodies a compulsory able-bodiedness that is characteristic of the normative white metropolitan subject (2006, 2). “Stirred” bespeaks blood circulation as much as it does invigoration (both of which are life-

affirming functions). The direct reference to Mary's blood is suggestive of her genes—a hallmark of eugenics and thus race (Coles et al. 2015, 1-22). Blood also signals the externalization of her race: her white complexion. Theoretically, the restoration of her whiteness would enable her skin to appear flushed. This imagery is concordant with colonial standards of beauty, for Mary is later described as “downright pretty” now that she “lost her little sour look” and “got a bright color” (Burnett 1911, 327)). The English climate (“air”) and environment (“moor”) are marked with adjectives that Mary implicitly embodies (“fresh, strong, pure”) as an anglicized—that is, racially “pure”—girl. In describing her newfound health, the narrator describes her newfound race. Because England *nurses* Mary to health, it can be seen as a foil not only to India but also to the ayah. If England's imagery is natural and edenic, then India is in effect unnatural and hellish (“too hot”). India's natural climate is as harmful for Mary's health not unlike how it was historically said to be for British mothers who were breast-feeding their children (Chaudhuri 1988, 528-529). Moreover, India's climate allegedly debilitates Mary just as the ayah does; both deprive Mary of the skill and desire to do anything. Even if the “fair” Mary is no longer akin to her “dark” ayah, the air of the English land is suffused with the ayah's spectrality. This reading enables us to understand the late and absent ayah's role in Mary's life (or revival, as it were) as ever-present even if (or perhaps because it is) ghostly.

Although Mary's illness is traced to her ayah, her ayah cannot be discussed without her Anglo-Indian employers. In critiquing Mary and other “grand people's” overdependent children, Martha (whether consciously or not) brings the ayahs' employers to the fore. She suggests that ayahs inherently coddle their wards and that their employers should thus know better than to hire them for their children. In saying so, Martha summons affluent families and seemingly blames them for hiring help but ends up absolving them of responsibility. She frames Anglo-Indian families as naive, depicting them as benign “fair fools” like their own children. Her rhetoric suggests that ayahs, too, are simple-minded,

for they know no better than to offer incapacitating parenting to their wards. This reductive line of reasoning neglects the violence that underlies the conditioning of ayahs into such a submission that they acquiesce to every whim of the Anglo-Indian children they rear, rendering these children absolutely dependent on their servants. For instance, the novel's narrator begins Mary's story by stating that, because Mary's mother did not want to raise a child, Mary's ayah was "made to understand that if she wanted to please the Mem Sahib [sic] she must keep the child out of sight as much as possible" (Burnett 1911, 1). The phrase "made to understand" is vague as it stands but, paired with the incentive to appease the memsahib (an ayah's employer who is an Anglo-Indian mother), suggests a power imbalance between the ayah and the memsahib that does not necessarily elide coercion (either so the ayah gains a reward like pay or avoids a punishment like censure). This context instructs us to shift away from seeing the ayah as an inherent producer of illness and turn to understanding how British employers incapacitate domestic servants into absolute subjugation such that they are then compelled to pander to their British wards. Colonial power over native peoples flavors the child-rearing of European children by native servants. Put this way, it is the colonizing class that produces disability—not only in their children but also in (and through) their children's servants. Not only does this revelation present the metropole and colonized lands as inextricable—it is not as simple and neat as supposing that the racial "other" alone who is the disease and its producer—but it also unveils the metropole's projection of its own practices onto the racial other in order to make the latter a scapegoat. This projection can be understood as a "phantasm," wherein cultural critics compress social issues, blame them on a single phenomenon, and do so by offloading the harm they themselves cause (Butler 2024, 4). In this case, scapegoating ayahs not only neglects colonial, master-servant power dynamics but also the neglectful parenting of Mary's mother and father. Instead of their parenthood being criticized, it is the ayah who absorbs the blame. This is not to say, however, the ayahs have no agency. The ayahs' practices are a direct response to their employers.

The ayahs modify their caregiving in order to make a livelihood. That their adaptation has direct consequences for Mary (as do other factors, including her own parents) exemplifies their crucial role in raising Mary without flattening them as paragons of evil or mere puppets. Martha's critique of ayahs and upper-class parents inadvertently expands the way we think about the responsibility for bourgeois children's incapacitation.

### **Mary's Caregiving as an Internalization of Her Ayah's Servitude**

Acknowledging the complexity of ayahs' services also enhances our understanding of how Mary internalizes her ayah's caregiving. In other words, in what ways is Mary rendered either incapacitated or intact by her ayah? We know that Mary achieves health (which is coded as whiteness) in England, but in what ways does Mary's colonially influenced upbringing help her (not) identify with a colonizing class? We may do well to revisit Stoler's scholarship: native nursemaids were not only thought to produce children who were "too lavishly waited upon" but also, because of this, children who turned into "young tyrants" who mistreated their servants and consequently "lacked the 'self-respect and independence' that later could make them into rational rulers and truly European" (Stoler 1995, 157). This reasoning suggests that European rule and rationality are not tyrannical perhaps because it does not account for European colonization, which was, and by no exaggeration, indeed tyrannical. So if Mary is spoiled as a result of being raised by her ayah, is Mary not, in some sense (if not fully), "truly European" and fit to be a future leader? Indeed, Mary often demonstrates the embodiment of colonial tyranny with her ayah: she demands rather than requests service from her ayah and other servants (Burnett 1911, 31), physically abuses her (Burnett 1911, 32), and, when her ayah dies, Mary treats her ayah as fungible, let alone mourns her death (Burnett 1911, 6). Mary's (mis)conduct suggests that she is aware of and maintains a hierarchy wherein she towers over her servants. That this hierarchy is based on class and race is seen clearly when, upon Martha's revelation that

she thought Mary was a native from India, Mary expresses violent fury and even calls Martha a “daughter of a pig” (Burnett 1911, 34). Mary’s attachment to this social hierarchy suggests the “self-respect” that would make her a fit European leader.<sup>3</sup> According to this assessment, Mary only lacks independence, which she later attains in England.

Mary’s attachment to a colonial hierarchy may explain the instances when she is positively depicted even when emulating her ayah’s caregiving; and, yet, these moments wherein her ayah resurges unsettle colonial reification of whiteness and the pathologization of Indianness. In one case, Mary, despite being restored to health and achieving European racial and cultural purity, replicates her ayah’s caregiving in an attempt to support her ill cousin Colin. She puts Colin to sleep by patting and stroking his hand and singing a “Hindustani” song in a low voice (Burnett 1911, 171). Colin receives her caregiving positively and is comforted. While Valint reads Mary’s character by this point in the novel as Colin’s passive caretaker—“mute, invisible, and prostrate” (2016, 275)—I suggest that Mary’s presence takes a multi-dimensional form. The scene illustrates that Mary embodies her ayah’s Indianness not only when she is seen as ill but also when she provides healing, not only when she receives (too much) care but also when she delivers it. This apparently benevolent example of Mary’s non-Europeanness—indeed, she retains an Indian language—both troubles the notion of her being totally incapacitated by her ayah and shows that her European loyalties (her investment in her uncle’s relatives and garden) enable her to employ her Indianness without reverting to being “Indian” in order to help Colin attain able-bodiedness. Indeed, her efforts result in the repair of Colin’s relationship with his father; with Colin’s regained physical strength, ability to stand and walk, and abandonment of the now-futile wheelchair, Colin’s father is overjoyed, wishes to hear all about his son’s recovery, and no longer senses the need to distance himself from his ill child in order to protect himself from sorrow (Burnett 1911, 370-375). In other words, Mary, an Anglo-Indian, supports rather than threatens the white bourgeois family, a

building block of colonial power that Stoler describes as a scene “where child’s sense of personhood, citizenship, and sexuality could be subverted, perverted, or well formed” (1995, 152). Within Mary’s achievement of racial and cultural purity, there nevertheless remain traces of India. Despite upholding colonial white able-bodiedness, Mary’s caregiving highlights that her residence in England does not fully anglicize her, for she brings with her and retains traits of her native Indian servants. When Mary takes care of Colin, Mary’s ayah and her caregiving reenter the narrative and once again influence Mary’s behavior and character. Her ayah’s care survives in Mary’s body and habits—her language, singing, and empathy for an ailing loved one—and consequently changes Colin himself, helping to restore him to health. Mary’s embodiment of her ayah’s traits thus unsettles the colonial pathologization of the Indian race. It challenges the notion that being in the English natural landscape or cultivating a garden on English land are the sole routes to gaining health, for it is through Mary’s embodiment of her ayah that Colin advances in achieving wellness. In Colin’s case, the spectral ayah in *The Secret Garden* is the secret guardian.

## Conclusion

*The Secret Garden* is a fecund site for a case study that determines how the ayah is racialized and pathologized to uphold white able-bodiedness. Despite the ayah being the site of this operation, this paper is produced in an effort to try to find and articulate the presence, agency, and subversiveness of ayahs. Olivia Robinson’s account of travelling ayahs is apt here:

...a significant number of the travelling ayahs were not simply accompanying their permanent employers home but formed a discrete and skilled sector of the native childcare labour force, leveraging opportunities for themselves and demonstrating considerable independence and assertiveness as they journeyed to and from the metropole (Robinson 2018, 45).

The agency of the travelling ayahs parallels the agency of Mary's ayah who remained in India. Whether it is in her fine-tuning her caregiving for self-protection or the ways in which she exemplifies the inextricability of the metropole with the colonized land, the ayah reveals and resists the flattening pathologization of native nursemaids. The ayah presents a nuance in tensions that even complicate Mary from being understood as either Indian or European. Though unnamed and unheard in the novel, the late ayah leaves in her wake a legacy that perennially haunts our discourse on colonialism in Burnett's novel, asserting her indisputable and complex influence and refusing to be compressed or ignored. In her emergence and reemergence in the narrative, Mary's ayah destabilizes key structural components of the novel—England as a regenerative land, the colony as a hub of ailment, and the self-contained identity of the metropolitan subject—offering an alternative narrative to the linear colonial discourse on disability, pathology, and race.

## Notes

1. For extant scholarship on *The Secret Garden*, see the following: Parminder Bakshi-Hamm, "Racialised Boundaries," 2012; Jerry Phillips, "The Mem Sahib, the Worthy, the Rajah and His Minions," 1993; György Tóth, "The Children of the Empire," 2003; Andries Wessels, "Cultural Polarities," 2016.

2. Martha racializes Indian complexions as both black and yellow. Whether this is due to Martha's ignorance or her particular manner of racializing Indians is unclear. Hence, although she expects Mary's skin to be black because she thinks Mary is a native of India, Martha's understanding of Mary as a native of India possibly does not dissipate after she sees that Mary's skin is yellow.

3. Perhaps the most pressing characteristic that disqualifies Mary from the consideration for leadership is not her being raised by an ayah but her being a girl and thus subject to Victorian patriarchal limitations. For more information on patriarchal standards in the Victorian period, see Griffin 2012, 3-34.

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