**CHAPTER I****INTRODUCTION**

This chapter provides an overview of the study, including its research background, identification of the problem, research questions, scope and limitations, objectives, and significance.

**1.1 Research Background**

There has been a plethora of study focusing on identity. Studies on identity are typically approached from diverse fields and perspectives. Tajfel & Turner (2004), for example, present a social identity theory—a perspective that discloses the social dimension of identity, defining social identity as *“those aspects of an individual's self-image that derive from the social categories to which he perceives himself as belonging”*. In this context, identity is intrinsically linked to group membership, which refers to an individual's affiliation with specific social categories such as ethnicity, nationality, religion, or gender. According to Social Identity Theory, individuals derive a portion of their self-concept from the social groups they identify with. These groups act as repositories of collective values, standards, and expectations, which influence behavior and perception. By engaging and participating, individuals internalize these collective norms, which then shape their self-image and the perceptions others hold of them. The classification of individuals into *"ingroup"* and *"outgroup"* dynamics influences attitudes and emotional bonds, thereby fostering a sense of belonging.

Apart from the social dimension of identity, it is also prominent in linguistic studies, particularly sociolinguistics. This field of study often examines identity in relation to language use and social interaction, as individuals construct and negotiate their identities through communicative practices. A significant approach is the community-based practice paradigm introduced by Eckert & McConnel-Ginet (2003), which underscores that language and identity are moulded via engagement in what they term *"communities of practice."* From this perspective, identity is not a static characteristic but rather a dynamic outcome of continuous participation in social and linguistic activities. Community members create collective norms and communication styles that signify affiliation, thereby shaping individual and group identities through their common linguistic practices. Eckert & McConnel-Ginet contend that *"social identity is constructed and manifested in local interactions through the use of language"* (p. 31). This evidence indicates that language both reflects and constructs identity through daily interaction, functioning as a powerful tool for exposing and indexing identity.

Although identity has been thoroughly analyzed from psychological and sociolinguistic perspectives, literary studies provide a distinctive and illuminating framework for comprehending identity as a narrative and symbolic construct. In literature, identity is both analyzed and portrayed, as revealed through characters who evolve and adapt to their environments. Literary texts enable the exploration of how identity is performed, negotiated, and transformed over time, especially through character development and thematic evolution. Theoretical viewpoints are frequently examined in literary studies. Characters in novels are rarely portrayed as having fixed or inherent identities; instead, they are shown to develop in response to social interactions, environmental changes, and personal experiences. Literature provides a substantial foundation for analyzing identity as a dynamic and ongoing process influenced by performance and negotiation. This interpretation corresponds with Judith Butler's notion of performativity, which posits that identity is not an inherent trait but a continual performance. In Gender Trouble (2002) Butler argues that gender identity is not a foundational element underlying gender expressions; rather, it is performatively constituted through the expressions that are claimed to be its results (p. 25). Butler emphasizes the importance of gender, while the concept of performativity has been extensively utilized to examine identity within a broader context. The performative dimension suggests that individuals consistently perform behaviors, language, and roles that align with societal norms to maintain a coherent sense of self.

Studies applying performativity theory to literature works is scarce, despite its applicability in numerous other disciplines. To date, the majority of studies utilizing Butler's theory have focused on adolescent or adult characters, primarily examining their gender identification. As for the example, Utami et al. (2022) examined the movie *Brave* to see how the main character's actions broke down gender stereotypes. In the same way, Bin & Sadati (2023) explored gender identity in Zohreh and Manouchehr. Inayah & Fauzi (2024) looked at how performative identity works in *The School for Good and Evil*, and Fitriani et al. (2021) talked about how gender is constructed in *The Danish Girl*. All of these studies align with Judith Butler's concept that identity is constructed through the repetition of social performativity; however, nearly all of them are restricted to gender issues within adult and adolescent literature and have yet to address in young, child character.

Additionally, *The Secret Garden* (2016) typically follows a psychological framework in its discussion of identity. Nandita (2022) utilizes the Big Five theory to discuss Mary's influence over Colin, Cesar (2019) applies psychoanalysis to investigate Mary's psychological transformation, and Mentari (2022) analyzes the characters' loneliness using a psychological and New Criticism lens. In contrast to these psychological approaches, several recent studies emphasize the environmental dimensions of identity formation. A study published in *The Lancet Planetary Health* by Oliver et al. (2022) highlights that children construct their self-identity through sustained experiences with nature, forming what is referred to as the *“ecological self.*” This interdependent form of identity is shaped not only by social relations but also by interactions with the environment. Furthermore, a study by Gil-Giménez et al. (2021) stresses that green spaces such as gardens and schoolyards serve as active spaces of identity formation for children, influencing their values, behavior, and emotional development.

Each of the studies stresses the importance of ecological awareness and the human-nature connection; nevertheless, they have not yet shown a correlation with identity formation in literary works, as discussed in this study. This study addresses the gap by employing Judith Butler's theory of performativity to examine how Mary develops her identity through recurrent social and cultural activities, such as caregiving and interaction with nature. Greg Garrard's ecocritical approach—dwelling—illustrates how Mary's emotional bond with the garden aids in the construction of her identity.

**1.2 Identification of the Problem**

The discussion of identity construction in literature frequently appears through characters undergoing significant personal and societal transformation. Nonetheless, the use of Judith Butler's performativity theory in literature—particularly in analyzing identity formation through repeated behaviors and social interactions—remains insufficiently examined. Current study utilizing Butler's approach primarily investigates gender identification in adolescents or adults, resulting in a gap in understanding the dynamics of performative identity in child characters.

Furthermore, although ecocritical approaches have been utilized in many literary analyzes, the concept of dwelling, as defined by Greg Garrard, is rarely combined with performativity theory to explore identity construction in narrative fiction. *The Secret Garden* exemplifies a unique case in which the protagonist's identity transformation is influenced by social interactions and her developing bond with the natural world. This study highlights the inadequacy of literary analysis that integrates performativity and dwelling frameworks to examine the development of identity in young characters through social and environmental interactions.

**1.3 Research Problems**

1. How is Mary Lennox’s identity initially constructed through the influence of British colonialism in *The Secret Garden*?
2. How does Mary’s interaction with the garden–through the process of dwelling– contribute to the construction of her identity?
3. How is Mary’s reconstructed identity portrayed through the intertwined between performativity and dwelling?

**1.4 Limitation of the Problem**

This study primarily examines the identity formation of Mary Lennox, the protagonist in *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett. The analysis delineates her evolution from the first phase to the concluding stage of the story, as depicted in the 2016 reprint of the original 1911 edition. The study excludes adaptations of the novel into alternative media, like film, television, or theater.

Utilizing Judith Butler's theory of performativity, this study assesses the construction of identity through ongoing social behavior and interaction. Furthermore, Greg Garrard's ecocritical concept of dwelling is applied to examine the function of the natural environment, particularly the secret garden—as a transforming and performative space. This study is confined to textual analysis and excludes considerations of gender or instructional methodologies. It examines the construction of identity within a literary framework, highlighting how identity is influenced by social interactions and environmental factors.

**1.5 Objectives of the Study**

1. To analyze how the initial construction of Mary Lennox’s identity is constructed under the influence of British colonialism.
2. To examine how Mary's interactions with the garden contribute to the construction of her identity through the process of dwelling.
3. To explore the intertwined construction of Mary’s identity and dwelling.

**1.6 Significances of the Study**

This study scholastically contributes by employing Judith Butler’s theory of performativity in literature, presenting a literary viewpoint that perceives identity as socially created rather than inherently static. It also broadens ecocritical literary analysis by integrating Greg Garrard’s concept of dwellings, demonstrating how natural environments, such as gardens, may serve as dynamic catalysts in characters’ identity construction and development.

Furthermore, the study provides insights into the portrayal of children's emotional development as a consequence of social and ecological processes. The results are potentially significant for educators, literary critics, and readers intrigued by the convergence of identity, nature, and metamorphosis in narrative fiction. This study enables the writer to cultivate a profound comprehension of how literature can influence environmental consciousness and foster more sustainable viewpoints on existence and being.