



Marianne Dreams, The Secret Garden and the Stifled Female Quest

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Catherine Storr's *Marianne Dreams*, published in 1958, is an unusual fantasy novel, and one that has received little critical attention. It raises questions about many aspects of children's fiction, including the function of fear, the implications of writing within the fantasy genre, and the presentation of sexual subject matter. Its conclusion, in which the abandoned Marianne lies prostrate and waiting on the cliffs of her fantasy world, is particularly striking. Parallels can be drawn between Marianne's situation and that of Mary in *The Secret Garden*: both protagonists take on the role of healer to a male child, and both lose their autonomy and narrative centrality as their stories progress. I intend to discuss these parallels with reference to the role of closure in fantasy and realist texts—especially as these impact on the agency of the female child—as well as discussing some of the broader issues raised by Storr's novel.

In the traditional quest novel, the (male) hero undergoes a difficult learning process, beginning an ongoing education which will eventually allow him to take his rightful place in society. This education expands his sphere of experience, taking him from the confines of home and family relationships into the wider world, and teaching him to moderate his ideals and illusions in the process. For a female protagonist the quest takes on a different pattern, given the more restricted place allotted to her by society. Her development reduces rather than expands her horizons, and teaches her to restrain worldly curiosity in favour of self-control and the selfless nurturing of others. Unlike her wandering male counterparts, the questing heroine takes 'the voyage in', remaining within the domestic circle (see Abel, Hirsch & Langland).

The Secret Garden, published in 1910, can be read as an example of the way that the 'voyage in' narrative pattern shapes the depiction of the female quest. Many readers have objected to the fact that, as Mary brings Colin back to health, her story fades into the background (see Keyser). Despite the narrator's obvious affection for Colin, he remains a less

interesting character than Mary, and the novel loses force as its focus shifts to his recovery. Yet it is not hard to see that, at the time of *The Secret Garden's* publication, Mary's self-discovery could not be rewarded with expanded horizons—unlike Colin, she does not have the option of aspiring to magic and science. Mary's quest leads her into the garden, whereas Colin's takes him back out of it. By absorbing Mary's initial self-discovery into Colin's story, *The Secret Garden* illustrates the culturally prescribed differences between male and female quest.

A similar pattern can be seen in *Marianne Dreams*. Like Mary, Marianne uses a space she has created—in this case a dreamscape rather than a garden—to save a sickly boy, regaining her own health in the process. Both heroines take on the role of the redemptive, nurturing female, finding their powers in matriarchal sources: Mrs Craven's abandoned garden in Mary's case, her grandmother's pencil in Marianne's. Marianne is not a literal orphan like Mary, but she is without family in her dreamworld. But the most striking similarity between the novels is that both heroines end up surrendering their own stories to those of their male protagonists. Mary's quest is gradually superseded by Colin's, whilst Marianne's surrender is more dramatic: Mark leaves the dreamworld after borrowing her pencil, and Marianne must wait for him to come back and fetch her. Both novels depict the loss of female autonomy, but whereas Mary's fate is 'naturalised' through *The Secret Garden's* realistic framework, Marianne's is used to investigate and contest the suppression of female quest. That is, Storr's text uses the fantasy mode to unravel the subject position allotted to the female protagonist by the master-narrative. A comparison of its narrative dynamics with those of *The Secret Garden* will serve to highlight this unravelling, bringing into focus the repercussions of Marianne's surrender to her dreamworld.

At the end of Burnett's novel, Colin runs out of the secret garden and into his unsuspecting father. Significantly, Mary is running behind him, and is an admiring onlooker at the father-son reunion: 'Mary,

who had been running with him and had dashed through the door too, believed that he managed to make himself look taller than ever than before.' (Burnett 1951, p.250). The race can be seen as the final stage in the relinquishing of Mary's story to Colin's; she is not mentioned in the last section of the novel, in which the amazed servants watch Colin and his father walk toward Misselthwaite Manor. As Lissa Paul points out, this shift is in accordance with the values of the author's time, in which, for a female child: 'growing up...means learning to be a follower not a leader, learning that winning selfhood means losing self' (Paul 1987, p.197).

Although the emphasis of *Marianne Dreams* remains on Marianne throughout the novel, its conclusion can be compared to Colin's victory in the running race as he emerges out of the garden. Mark also abruptly leaves the site of his healing, and Marianne's ambiguous state after his departure echoes Mary's invisibility at the end of Burnett's novel. Storr's novel can be analysed as a metaphorical version of the disappearance of Mary's quest, using fantasy and psychoanalytic symbolism to literalise the forces underlying Burnett's gothic realism. This is not to suggest that Storr has deliberately reworked *The Secret Garden*, but to draw attention to the intertextual relationship between the two works. Whilst *The Secret Garden* finishes with Colin's triumph, *Marianne Dreams* looks at the fate of the thwarted female protagonist, and its conclusion is much bleaker. Marianne's prostration on the cliffs, the image of the hovering helicopter, and her frantic repetitions as she tries to reassure herself of Mark's return, all give an underlying chill to the apparent calm of the closing passage: 'He had not deserted her, he had waited for her, he had not wanted to go without her, he would come back and fetch her.' (Storr 1989, p.191). If *Marianne Dreams* is read as an analysis of the limitations of the female quest narrative, then it must be seen as reaching a particularly desolate verdict.

One of the most striking aspects of Storr's novel is its overall lack of moral guidance, despite the seemingly comforting clichés of Marianne's sick-bed life. The

Blyton-esque adult narrator of the waking segments— '...she longed for her mother to say, yes, she would be able to have her next riding lesson, more than she longed for anything in the world, because that would be a promise that she would be better very quickly and wouldn't any longer feel so queer and unreal' (p.13)—contrasts sharply with the precise, less chatty tone of the dream world:

The grass writhed and tore at its roots, the pale flowers beat against their stems, the thin thread of smoke was blown out like a candle flame, and disappeared into the dark sky. The wind whistled round the house and was gone, leaving Marianne deaf for a moment, and suddenly chilled ... I'm frightened here,' she said. (pp.21-2)

Although the waking sections appear to offer the reassurance of the familiar adult voice, this is undercut by the lack of moral guidance in the dreamworld. That this is an unusual tactic becomes clearer in the light of Jacqueline Rose's comments on novels intended for the children's market.

Rose has described the motivating forces behind this fiction as 'a soliciting, a chase, or even a seduction', whereby the adult author/giver tries to draw in and define the child reader (Rose 1984, p.2). She argues that '[c]oming-to-be is a story that we repeat continually to ourselves', and that childhood, as the site of this coming-to-be, is therefore the symbol of human origins, of pure identity (Rose 1984, p.26, 8). At the end of *The Secret Garden*, order is restored when Colin tells the children's story to the adult authority figure, his father:

The listener laughed until tears came into his eyes, and sometimes tears come into his eyes when he was not laughing. The Athlete, the Lecturer, the Scientific Discoverer was a laughable, lovable, healthy young human thing.

(Burnett 1951, p.251)

Presumably Mr Craven will now resume his rightful role as father and patriarch; the children's coming-to-be re-establishes the proper order, and renews

the father's true identity. But *Marianne Dreams* does not use Marianne as a 'point of origin' through which order can be created, and her story is not given the final approbation of the real/adult world. Instead, the closing image of her waiting for Mark is used to investigate the underlying workings of the redemptive woman/child narrative.

A closer look at the function of the narrative voice will begin to clarify how Storr achieves this result. The novel begins with the specifics of the waking world—'Marianne had looked forward to her tenth birthday as being something quite special; quite different from any birthday she had yet had, for two reasons.' (p.9)—and alternates throughout between this child-directed tone, typical of fifties children's realism, and the more impersonal writing of the dream sections. This has the effect of framing the frightening events of the dreamworld within the solicitous, seducing tone of the waking one (to use Rose's phrasing). Consider, for example, the switch between the end of the disturbing eleventh chapter, 'Them'—'Marianne screamed. She felt that she was screaming...like a siren: but she could not utter a word.' (p.108)—and the tone at the beginning of the twelfth chapter, after she awakens in the real world: 'When Miss Chesterfield had gone, the next day before lunch, Marianne got out her drawing book...' (p.109). Using the clichéd tone of children's realism, Storr's narrator evokes a feeling of safety, offsetting the preceding danger of the dreamworld. It is this failure to return to the safety of the real world, with its associated child-directed voice, that makes the end of *Marianne Dreams* so unsettling.

Instead of the staples of girlhood fiction with which the novel begins—birthdays, riding lessons, nurturing mothers, food—the novel's conclusion is focalised through Marianne's thoughts. The apparent serenity of her surroundings adds an air of menace to her abandonment:

She could hear the hum of drowsy bees, searching for

honey, the wailing cry of the seagulls, and, at the cliff's foot, the lapping of small lacy waves. Here, in the dream, it was a golden afternoon...

Mark would come: he would take her to the sea. Marianne lay down on the short sweet-smelling turf. She would wait too.
(p.191)

Despite the reassuring framework in the waking world, the lack of a 'return to reality' closure means that there is no guiding voice with which to complete the 'seduction' of the child, to provide a finalising vision that brings the waking and dreaming sections into a coherent balance. In *The Secret Garden*, the narrator sanctions Colin's recovery as the culmination of the novel, even though readers are often unconvinced; in Storr's work, the narrator shows little emotional involvement in Mark's recovery, and readers are left to make their own decision about Marianne's situation at closure. This lack of an interpretive framework is rare in children's fiction: it does not aim 'to take the child in' (Rose 1984, p.2), but deliberately leaves her outside.

Sarah Gilead has pinpointed three main types of return-to-reality closure in children's fantasy novels: those which indicate that a growth process has been completed (*The Wizard of Oz*), those which sentimentally misread the fantasy content (*Alice in Wonderland*) and closure that conveys a sense of ambivalence, loss or tragedy (*Peter Pan*) (Gilead 1992). She notes that the latter fails to provide 'the closural translation of fantasy or magic into some readable, culturally encoded set of religious, moral or psychological meanings.' (Gilead 1992, p.95). *Marianne Dreams* also fails to do this, but in this case due to the absence of the return-to-reality convention. In *Peter Pan*, for instance, the narrator's nostalgia and thwarted desire for childhood, heightened by his closing exile from Neverland, create a sense of loss. It is Marianne who is exiled in Storr's novel, within a fantasyland of her own imagination, and the narrator withdraws, not mourning, celebrating or explaining her plight.

Unlike Peter, who is made 'other' to the adult narrator, and remains positioned within discourses of childhood, Storr's narrator withdraws, leaving Marianne without a 'culturally encoded set of religious, moral or psychological meanings.' (The effect of this final, noncommittal silence is particularly sharp against the familiar child-oriented tone of the waking world, and the expectation such a tone will return to explain away the frightening dream world.) As well as challenging traditional notions of female quest, then, *Marianne Dreams* also plays with the convention of return-to-reality closure, and with its colonising function in children's literature.

Rather than returning her to adult authority, Marianne's situation in her fantasy world makes her the 'other' to a child of the opposite sex. For Baum's Dorothy, Burnett's Mary and Colin, or Carroll's Alice (albeit unconvincingly), the secret or fantasy world is a place from which external realities are eventually renegotiated, and which is consequently left behind. The child's quest readies them to become 'insiders', taking them from exile/orphan status to potential participants in an adult world. For Mary, entering this world means losing part of her autonomy, adopting the feminine virtue of nurturing others. Similarly, Marianne must accept responsibility for healing Mark, even to the extent of giving him the source of her power—her grandmother's pen. By remaining stranded in the dreamworld, Marianne is defined purely by her waiting for Mark; by returning to reality other factors would have to be taken into account. So in failing to provide a closural framework, Storr ensures that Marianne remains Mark's 'other'. Although superficially aimed at children, *Marianne Dreams* is more concerned with gender than with 'drawing the child in'.

The children's relationship can be viewed in terms of Jung's anima and animus. Marianne observes that: "'We're just opposites, him and me'" (p.32) and they both realise that 'It's not my house, anyway, it's just as much yours' (p.29). Their roles are stereotypically masculine and feminine: she nurtures Mark back to health, feeling responsible for him; he

dismisses her explanations as illogical; she is apologetic, he sceptical. Mark accepts Marianne's story with doubt—"You're mad...Still, it's nice of you to mind so much, even if it is all in your imagination" (p.91)—since it defines his own power and identity. If *Marianne Dreams* is read as a tale of anima and animus, then Marianne becomes the passive, feminine caretaker of the unconscious world so that Mark can assume his position in the external one. This is akin to the way that Mary's discovery of the secret garden facilitates Colin's recovery, yet negates her own quest. For a writer of Burnett's time, it may have been difficult to imagine a different fate for Mary. Storr's text, written almost fifty years later, interrogates the traditional female quest pattern, playing out the narrative dynamics governing the suppression of female quest. *The Secret Garden*, which provides a strong illustration of these dynamics, can therefore be considered as a pre-text to *Marianne Dreams*.

Marianne's dreamworld can be treated as a representation of her unconscious, initially of her own making, but also with its own inescapable demands. This explains why Marianne can only draw objects that are relevant to her and Mark's relationship, and can only erase superfluous ones. Thus the bars on the windows cannot be erased, nor can the watching stones be altered. Marianne's fantasy land becomes the repository of her displaced fears, in which she has no choice but to rescue Mark—if she ignores him, he becomes ill in the waking world. At the end of the novel, she is trapped in an unconscious world that she has felt partially compelled to create. The closing description of its peaceful emptiness is thus analogous to her own state as the vehicle of Mark's redemption, and to her passiveness without his intervention:

...the sea and the land were at peace with each other; even the dark country behind the hills was wrapped in a soft grey haze which was gentle, not frightening, at one with the beauty of the day.
Everything seemed to be resting; content; waiting (p.191).

Marianne has no choice but to surrender her autonomy to Mark, despite her misgivings—"The pencil had done its last piece of magic for her; it had...deliberately drawn itself, and so said goodbye" (p.183)—and it is at this point that she first falls asleep in her dream country. She has started to 'live' in the land she created for Mark.

In a feminist reading of the novel, Marianne's 'life' in her unconscious is a type of death: she is trapped in the feminine role she was compelled to create in order to save Mark. It is notable that this death, and the onset of her illness, occur at the onset of adolescence. Mark and Marianne's ride to the lighthouse, past the watching stones, can be read as an escape from the fear of encroaching sexuality (the stones) to the beacon of phallogocentric society (the lighthouse). Marianne's jealous reaction to Mark's sexual power over their governess—"It was Mark's idea", Miss Chesterfield said. She sounded embarrassed and pleased.' (p.52)—first causes her to draw in the terrifying stones, imprisoning him in an intuitive image of sexual fear: "They watch him all the time, everything he does. They will never let him out." (p.55). When she tries to thwart Mark by drawing in a female friend, Fiona, the girl becomes sexually threatening, 'a miniature giantess, booted and spurred' (p.83). Marianne's childhood desires, for prettiness and horse-riding clothes, have become tainted with sexual fear. By escaping to the lighthouse, away from 'the dark country behind the hills', she is responding to the externalised fear of her emerging sexuality.

The novel suggests that, for the female adolescent, the loss of agency is part of this escape—a stance which has parallels with Lacanian theory. This theory holds that the female is denied subjectivity, since she is unable to progress from the maternal realm to the symbolic order of language, becoming a lack or absence within it. The pre-symbolic state is ruled by the maternal, and is ruptured by the entry into language, just as the grandmother's pencil is used to draw Marianne's fantasy world, but 'writes itself' over to Mark. As a consequence, Marianne

experiences the death, or rupture, of her ability to enter the symbolic order, and instead must wait for Mark to translate it for her. There is a sexual awkwardness over Mark's acquisition of the pencil, and he will not let Marianne watch him use it. It is also significant that Mark uses her pencil to write with, when Marianne had only used it for drawing. In keeping with their rational/intuitive opposition, he produces 'a neat, workmanlike drawing of a tower' (p.203) and a note, whilst Marianne's drawings are all rough approximations. With the help of the pencil, Mark has written himself into the symbolic order of language. Marianne, who has been refused entry, must stay in the maternal realm she has created for him: she has surrendered control of her unconscious world to 'the other', and been denied full subjectivity in the real world.

Discussion of *Marianne Dreams* with respect to Lacanian theory, narrative voice, and the conventional function of the return-to-reality framework indicates that the novel is not concerned with childhood as a point of origin, but with the way that female agency is redirected into the primary demands of the male quest, and the consequent stifling of female selfhood. This stifling is enacted in *The Secret Garden*, which loses impact as Mary's role dwindles into that of Colin's helper. The loss of impetus stems from the narrator's devotion to Colin, and apparent blindness to the 'split narrative' caused by Mary's disappearance. As Mary's presence fades—and there is little sense of her presence in the concluding paragraphs—so does the 'life' of the text. Although Marianne is also a redemptive female, and ends up in a similarly passive situation to Mary, she does not 'fade'. This is because Marianne remains at the centre of the narrative; the focus never shifts onto Mark. By maintaining narrative interest in the female protagonist, Storr's novel shows how the male quest necessitates the relinquishing of female identity, and thus relocates the source of *The Secret Garden's* lost impetus. Only when Mark leaves, and Marianne starts to 'live' in her dreamworld, does her stasis echo Mary's gradual disappearance: the

troubling and unexpected image of Marianne's prostration on the cliffs literalises the unspoken factors underlying Mary's curtailed development. *Marianne Dreams* thus highlights the fate of the redemptive heroine, revealing the interior dimensions of her effacement.

Although the parallels with *The Secret Garden* are more immediately striking, Marianne's fate can also be read on a broader scale, as a feminist analysis of the classic quest pattern whereby the 'woman in the parlour' provides the stable background to the male hero: that is, the familiar binaries of woman as space/eternity/passivity and man as movement/time/action. Her fantasy land, or psyche, becomes an empty, timeless landscape waiting for Mark's call to action, and Marianne takes on aspects of the smothering mother: "Where do you want to go?" Marianne asked, irritated and hurt by his not finding her tower and her cliffs good enough' (p.179). The novel's many references to reading and fiction—'Would she be purified by suffering, like the heroines of old-fashioned books...' (p.24)—emphasise both its self-reflexiveness, and the fact that it is a response to earlier texts. By drawing attention to 'the heroines of old-fashioned books', *Marianne Dreams* prompts the reader to recognise its self-conscious reshaping of the female quest pattern, and foregrounds its participation in the discourse of female (self)sacrifice. It recalls Woolf's *The Voyage Out*, and the truncated quests of Victorian heroines, bringing to mind the familiar figure of the doomed romantic heroine: George Eliot's Maggie Tulliver and Molly Cass, Hardy's Tess and Henny of *The Man Who Loved Children*. Marianne's surrender to her unconscious world has strong resonances with the female quest tradition, providing a feminist reinterpretation of the thwarted progress of her precursors.

Storr's use of the fantasy mode has allowed her to pinpoint the dynamics underlying this death, using metaphors of the psyche and symbols drawn from psychoanalysis to explore the fate of the dying realist heroine. As Felicity Hughes has observed, the use of fantasy is a convenient front behind which writers

of children's fiction can disguise disturbing or subversive topics, since fantasy is often considered too childish to convey serious subject matter (Hughes 1978). It seems likely that, by conveying sexual threat through the watching stones, and the learning of sex roles through escape to the lighthouse, *Marianne Dreams* is conveying its difficult subject matter obliquely. Storr has said that she considers analogy is the best way to approach topics of violence and cruelty, since:

fantasy explores a child's experience at all levels...you can engage its interest with the events of the plot and at the same time you're meeting its not understood difficulties, you're sounding echoes of uncomprehended conflicts

(Storr 1970, p.26, 32).

This raises the question: what sort of echoes is *Marianne Dreams* intended to sound? A brief comparison with the sequel novel, *Marianne and Mark*, will help to distinguish these particular concerns.

Storr has acknowledged that Marianne and Mark's bike ride away from the stones is intended as a sexual metaphor: 'Whether they recognise it as that or not I don't know but when I had written it I saw that it was deliberate.' (Storr 1970, p.37). In the follow-up novel, Marianne also goes on a bike ride, but this time it is a motorbike, and her companion an undesirable lower-class boy. Marianne is older now, holidaying with her uncle and aunt, and trying to understand teenage life and love. She has a real-life encounter with Mark, who advises her to trust her own judgement: "Surely the important thing is to be doing what's right for you, at whatever age you happen to have reached?" (Storr 1960, p.202). A budding romance begins on their walk to the lighthouse, is disrupted by Mark's disbelief in psychic phenomena, and then tentatively resumed in the closing pages. There is a lot of attention paid to the validity of psychics, with the apparent verdict being that it is best to do 'what's right for you', without resorting to the supernatural for help. Mark still

finds Marianne illogical and over-emotional, and still treats her patronisingly, but this time he is a mentor-figure. It is as if, both having experienced adolescent trauma on an unconscious level, Mark has gained the authority to help Marianne become a woman. If the fantasy of *Marianne Dreams* is intended to guide young adolescents through what they do not consciously comprehend, then *Marianne and Mark's* teen-romance realism seems to be the next stage—showing older adolescents how to deal with growing up in the real world.

Marianne and Mark is disappointing in that it seems to trivialise the 'otherworldly' concerns of its predecessor, in order to show that self-reliance and integrity are the best tools for life. It seems that Storr has chosen to present the 'not understood difficulties' of *Marianne Dreams* through fantasy, whereas the intricacies of teenage life can be understood, and are therefore dealt with through realism. In keeping with Hughes' theory, fantasy is being used as a cover for taboo material. It is a matter for debate what this fantasy teaches children, and whether it is 'good' for them: is it a cathartic escape from sexual fear, a lesson in the dangers of female self-sacrifice, or a demonstration of sex-role stereotyping? From a feminist perspective, it can be read as an unusual version of the tragic heroine's death, or of the realist heroine's capitulation to the master-narrative, but its purpose in teaching children is questionable (although so is that of much children's fiction).

The film *Paperhouse*, based on the novel, could be used to argue that, were it not for the Blytonesque framing narrator, *Marianne Dreams* could be seen as horror rather than children's fantasy. Intended for an adult audience, *Paperhouse* takes the novel's Freudian imagery and basic premise: a sick girl (Anna) meets a crippled boy (Mark) in a dream landscape she has drawn, and they escape to a lighthouse. But instead of the watching stones, it is Anna's father—enraged that her drawings have blinded him—from whom the children must escape. In what seems like a metaphorical rape, he attacks her with a hammer; in waking life, this corresponds to Anna's

resuscitation by heart massage. Anna is reunited with her father, but Mark dies, flying away from the lighthouse in a helicopter. As John Collick has noted, the film creates 'parodies of Freudian imagery', inviting 'analysis which is then exposed as a misreading' (Collick 1991, p.287). This leads him to conclude that the film presents fantasy as a helpful but powerless property of childhood imagination, and is a defusing response to a spate of child abuse accusations in England (Collick 1991, pp.288-9). *Paperhouse* thus has only a superficial resemblance to the concerns of *Marianne Dreams*, but its transformation of the novel's basic images into a horror film show that, were it not for the consoling narrative frame, its appropriateness for children would be open to question. This case could probably be made for many children's books, but the interesting thing about *Marianne Dreams* is that it seems to try and lull the reader in the realistic sections, then leaves them stranded in the fantasy world, refusing to offer guidance—not a tactic generally associated with children's fiction.

Storr has claimed that her writing is not intended 'to do something for children', but 'to get rid of my own fears...to discover what I feel and to air some childish part of myself.' (Storr 1970, p.38). If so, the preoccupations of *Marianne Dreams* may also be aired in her story 'The Haunted Room', included in *Tales from a Psychiatrist's Couch*, a collection of short anecdotal stories based on Storr's work as a psychiatrist (Storr 1977). In the story, a lawyer named Graham Richardson comes to see the Storr-character, and gradually reveals his obsession with a room that he inhabits in the period between waking and sleeping. Like Mark, he is 'half self-mocking, half defiant', and, like Marianne, the psychiatrist fashions a room in accordance with his needs: 'My room, which was built not out of my needs and desires, but from the catalogue he gave me of his...but I could—and in his absence, did—dismiss it easily from my mind.' (Storr 1977, p.34, 40). Richardson's mother was a thwarted pianist, and he gradually discovers that there is a young boy in the room, waiting to

teach him about music: "He'd simply lead me into feeling by his own untrained enthusiasm." (Storr 1977, p.44). When he disappears, the psychiatrist decides that he has joined the boy in the dreamworld, and hopes he will be happier there. Like Marianne, she is left with an empty space she has created to help another person, and who has chosen to leave. It can be speculated that Storr is airing parts of her feelings about psychiatric practice in this story, and that this has some bearing on the use of the 'lulling' narrator in *Marianne Dreams*.

Collick views both *Paperhouse* and *Marianne Dreams* as wish-fulfilling escapes from adult authority, akin to *The Princess Bride* and *Labyrinth* (Collick 1991, p.288). However, by reading *Marianne Dreams* as a linear, clearly resolved story, and one in which the reader is offered a stable subject position (Collick 1991, p.288), he does not address the significance of Marianne remaining in her fantasy world. Juliet Dusinberre, in *Alice to the Lighthouse*, looks at the way in which, if writers allow their central characters to die, the readers are in effect killed too, displaced from the position from which they interpret the text (Dusinberre 1987, p.142-3). Writing of the novel *Dream Days*, she hypothesises that: 'The story gives the character a [fantasy]room, but the room is, for the creator of that character, the story itself, his own capacity to enter another place and time.' (Dusinberre 1987, p.217). If Marianne's prostration represents Storr's feelings of being shut out when she is left with a 'haunting room' of her patient's devising, then by encasing the story in a 'safe' framework, she may be hiding the fantasy content from herself: aiming her story at children allows her to slip her fears past herself and into the fantasy sections. This would be in keeping with Storr's assertion that 'I am not a conscious writer. I never know what I am doing, until I have done it.' (Storr 1970, p.34). Given that Storr is a psychiatrist, it seems unlikely that she is unaware of her use of symbols, but the parallels between 'The Haunting Room' and *Marianne Dreams* suggest that Marianne's situation may in some aspects reflect her own.

Dusinberre's equation of the fantasy world with the creation of story, and of the death of the character with that of the reader, can be applied to Storr's novel in a wider sense. Dusinberre has centred her text around Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, giving specific attention to Mrs Ramsay's role as an inventor of plots for other people's lives (Dusinberre 1987, p.145). Marianne is also the inventor of the plot of Mark's life, and of her fantasy world, and *Marianne Dreams* can be read as an analogy of female creativity. To begin with, Marianne wants to get into the house, while Mark wants to get out. Eventually, Mark gets out of Marianne's fantasy altogether, but she remains inside. Over the course of the novel, then, Marianne's self-serving creativity (her desire to enter the house) becomes male-directed, before disappearing altogether. This suggests that Marianne's initial creative act becomes dependent on the male meta-narrative: when she refuses to help Mark, she cannot re-enter her creative space, just as she cannot produce objects that aren't relevant to his recovery. Once she accepts the necessity of giving control of her creative world to Mark, she loses the power to originate either his or her own narrative. This could imply that, just as Marianne ends up inventing a plot to serve Mark's needs, so female creative acts are inevitably co-opted into masculinist ends.

If Marianne is stuck in another's plot, though, then so is the reader. The lack of overt narratorial comment in the closing paragraphs means that the reader is 'trapped' in Marianne's thoughts, without any greater guidance: a position mirroring the way that Marianne has become trapped in her own creation, now that Mark is not there to guide her. Because Marianne's fantasy world has been shaped to further Mark's quest, she has essentially lost her selfhood—a type of death. Because the reader is 'stranded' in Marianne's suspended fantasy world, they are also 'dead', denied explanation or resolution. In effect, the reader is made to inhabit Marianne's position, waiting passively within another's narrative, hovering at the point at which female quest surrenders to the master narrative. *Marianne Dreams*

does not offer the reader a conventional return-to-reality 'solution', but instead positions them within the loss of selfhood implicit in traditional stories of female development.

This is a textual strategy that gains much of its impact from the novel's resonance with the female quest tradition, offering a powerful image of the control of narrative constraints on the construction of the female subject. Returning to the specific comparison with *The Secret Garden*, it becomes evident that the loss of narrative impetus and female selfhood in Burnett's novel is represented as the death of the reader and of the female protagonist in *Marianne Dreams*. If viewed as a metafictional equivalent to Mary's gradual effacement, the impact of Marianne's story resides in the way that it forces the reader to experience the channelling of Mary's quest into Colin's. In effect, this means that the narrative forces operating implicitly throughout *The Secret Garden* are foregrounded at the culmination of *Marianne Dreams*. The conclusion situates the reader within a literal image of thwarted female narrative, leaving them stranded in the marginalised position allocated to the female subject by the master narrative. It is this factor that constitutes the novel's central critique of 'the voyage in'.

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