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Trapped in Her Lover's Arms:
The Problem of Courtship and Romance
in Selected Novels by L.M. Montgomery

A thesis

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Contents

Abstract

L.M. Montgomery may be viewed as a subversive author, rebelling against patriarchal authority. She employed the conventions of the courtship or domestic novel of popular fiction as a vehicle by which to challenge existing gender roles. Montgomery recognized that tales of perfect love and happily-ever-after were not a part of most women's reality. However, the market demanded these happy stories. Consequently, Montgomery was motivated to create a fiction which would combine the fantasy of happily-ever-after with her perception of reality. She arranged romantic marriages for her heroines for those readers who wanted this message, but she also established a counter-discourse which suggests that marriage, ultimately, can be entrapping for a young woman. These stories could simultaneously satisfy the reader and question assurances of the heroine's future happiness.

On a superficial level, the resolutions of these novels seem to assert the value of romantic love. However, the 'happily-ever-after' ending fails to satisfy, as in each case the heroine's marriage also marks the necessity of leaving behind something essential to both her identity and her happiness. Thus, Montgomery questions society's emphasis upon romance as the greatest fulfilment for women. In the novels, the young woman's desire for respect and equality comes into conflict with a romantic world view.

I have selected five novels in which Montgomery addresses the critical issues of identity and equality. In each of these, the development of character and the resolution of the heroine's romance address how courtship and the promise of marriage challenge the integrity of the heroine's identity. A close examination of these narratives reveals that Montgomery's apparent focus upon love and romance does not preclude the absence of a deeper, shadowy meaning about the hazards of male-female relationships.

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Introduction:
Reconciling Romance and Identity

When approaching the novels of L.M. Montgomery (1874-1942), I believe we must address two central issues. First of all, we must consider how her identity as a woman had an impact on her fiction. Secondly, we must address the issue of genre as an influence on her structure and style. These two elements, however, do not operate independently. It becomes apparent in Montgomery's novels that gender plays a role in determining genre, and that the conventions of genre may be subverted to address issues of gender and social construction.

Women were faced with a number of constraints in their literary pursuits. The doctrine of separate spheres was the norm, and this stressed the notion that women possessed less mental power and so should concentrate their energies in the domestic realm, while men were said to have the intellectual capabilities to function in the outside world. As a result of this construction, women were raised to be decorative, domestic goddesses and were held up as moral guardians (M. Rubio 5). Because of the nature of this prescribed role, women writers were expected to produce works which possessed "sentiment, refinement, tact, observation, domestic expertise, high moral tone, and knowledge of the female character" (Showalter, qtd. in Pike 50). In other words, during the Victorian era -- and for some time afterwards -- it was felt that women should write stories for women, about things which were acceptable 'feminine' topics. For those women, like Montgomery, who saw themselves primarily as professional writers, this was of particular importance (Pike 51).

Consequently, Montgomery both researched her market and tailored her stories to satisfy its conventions. As Elizabeth Epperly notes, "[f]rom reading early examples of Montgomery's

stories, we see how thoroughly she imitated the patterns of the day -- dramatic reversals of fortune, suddenly discovered long-lost relatives, sentimental love scenes, and purple patches of description" (5). This patterning has been described in a number of ways. As Mary Rubio notes, Montgomery was approached in her own time as an author of popular fiction, and her novels were described as "romances," "regional idylls," "domestic fiction," and "sentimental stories" (1). All of these are fictional forms which often characterized women's writing in the period. If we classify Montgomery as an author of romance, or romantic stories, then she is writing within a structured, recognized form of literature which simultaneously enriches and constrains her novels.

Not only did romance constitute the format of Montgomery's fiction, it stood also as one of her characters' central concerns. As Epperly asserts, "[i]n every book she wrote, the main characters grapple consciously or unconsciously with their conception of the romantic. The best-drawn heroines struggle openly to define romance and the romantic, and in so doing challenge readers to assess their own assumptions and prescriptions. . . . Romance involves the heroine's most intimate thoughts about herself as well as the most stringent cultural expectations for her" (Epperly 9).

With this focus, Montgomery may be said to hold up a mirror to her culture which ". . . captures and reflects expectations and dreams of her culture -- especially those of girls and women" (Epperly 249). This mirror is made up of the literary and cultural expectations of women, most particularly those of the late Victorian era, when the only acceptable conclusion for a novel about a young woman was marriage. As a result, ". . . Montgomery had to portray marriage as the site of the ultimate female happiness. . . . She arranged romantic marriages for her heroines for those readers who wanted this message, but she also embedded a counter-

discourse which showed that marriage could pose grave dangers to a talented woman's autonomy, happiness, and self-fulfilment" (M. Rubio 5). Through this counter-discourse, the reader comes to recognize Montgomery's dissatisfaction with the dominant views of the day regarding the relations of men and women. She feels constrained by the doctrine of separate spheres and suspicious of society's emphasis upon romance as the greatest fulfillment for women.

From her younger years onward, she had difficulty with the idea of romance: "Montgomery always wanted more genuine companionship from her relationships with males (and later from marriage) than was encouraged by the prevailing social system" (Yeast *Friendships* 117). She could not reconcile the two kinds of relationships. In fact, "Montgomery posits friendship and romantic love as mutually exclusive. For her, romantic liaison is an entry into sexual politics which insists upon the subordination of female to male. A platonic relationship, on the other hand, means to her that she has equality with a male" (Yeast *Friendships* 117-118). The desire for respect and equality, and the conflict of this desire with a romantic world view, is a pressing concern for Montgomery and this is expressed in her novels.

How, then, can we reconcile Montgomery's use of romantic convention with her obvious misgivings about the impact of this world view upon a young woman's life? As Wayne Fraser suggests, "[w]omen, throughout Canadian history, used feminine forms of writing to reflect, and to reflect on, the issues of their times" (165). From this perspective, we may see Montgomery as using the platform of domestic literature, which society prescribed as acceptable fare for female minds, in order to advance ideas which might otherwise be viewed as contentious.

I believe it is this approach which Montgomery employs in her writing, a technique which may be described using Elizabeth Epperly's term "romanticized realism" (3). I perceive 'realism' as

being the physical and historical background which Montgomery creates in the novel, and 'romance' as being the method by which her plot is advanced. The message -- or counter-discourse -- which Montgomery is advancing falls somewhere between these two poles.

Part of our contextual emphasis, then, should be placed upon the nature of romance and romantic literature. This is a complex term in both a literary and linguistic sense, so some attempt at a definition must be made. I would suggest that a comprehensive and workable definition can be achieved only by examining the common characteristics of romantic novels. In this manner, we may establish the conventions of the genre and determine how Montgomery exploits and subverts these conventions.

Kay Mussell suggests that the romantic novel ". . . begins with an assumption, unquestioned and unexamined . . . that the necessary, preordained, and basic goal of any woman is to achieve a satisfying, mature, and all-fulfilling marriage. . . . Although other kinds of events and actions by the protagonist may take up much of the novel, they are always related eventually to the woman's marital status and condition of romantic happiness at the end of the book" (xii). Furthermore, ". . . romances imply that the excitement in women's lives ends in early adulthood, once they have completed the great quest for a mate who defines the rest of the forty or fifty years they will probably live" (Mussell xiv). Romantic novels, therefore, assert that the most fulfilling and appropriate course of a woman's life leads to marriage and domesticity. Certainly, the novels which I have selected for this study conclude in marriage. Thus we must examine how Montgomery heroines respond to this convention.

Janice Radway examines both the structure of contemporary romances and their effect upon readers. She defines romances as ". . . open-ended stories about different heroines who

undergo different experiences," where the plot is advanced using ". . . the conventions of the realistic novel, which always pretends to be telling the as-yet-uncompleted story of a singular individual" (Radway 17). Radway further concludes that ". . . each romance is, in fact, a mythic account of how women *must* achieve fulfillment in patriarchal society. This is true precisely because the central events in each romance are structurally the same" (17). Again, the plots of the five novels I have selected follow this patterning. The heroines' experiences are different, yet the resolutions of the novels are the same.

Although the literary form's ultimate message seems to be "pleasure for women is men," Radway suggests that the traditional conclusions may be interpreted as "chronicles of female triumph" (54). She explains that for the reader, the experience of romance may be seen to constitute ". . . a utopian vision in which female individuality and a sense of self are shown to be compatible with nurturance and care by another" (Radway 55). From this perspective, even though the conventional ending restores the status quo in gender relations, it may also be understood as an example of a woman's ultimate triumph because the heroine ". . . maintains her integrity on her own terms by exacting a formal commitment from the hero and simultaneously provides for her own future in the only way acceptable to her culture" (Radway 81). This is one way of interpreting the romantic conclusion of the novel; however, at the same time, the resolution of each novel suggests Montgomery's own reservations about the wisdom of the marriage.

Radway further proposes that if union with a man is the only way a woman may achieve status, power and acceptance in society, the heroine's marriage which has provided all of these may be viewed as a type of success. In other words, the attainment of recognition by a man, who

is the figure of power in the dominant culture, may be seen as ". . . a sign of a woman's attainment of legitimacy and personhood in a culture that locates both for her in the roles of lover, wife, and mother" (Radway 84). Montgomery does not question the material rewards of marriage in any of the novels; however, she does question what the heroine must forfeit in exchange.

Northrop Frye approaches romance from the perspective of literary history. He states: "Romance is the structural core of all fiction: being directly descended from folktale, it brings us closer than any other aspect of literature to the sense of fiction, considered as a whole, as the epic of the creature, man's vision of his own life as a quest" (N. Frye 15). Romance, then, is a primary and natural form of human story-telling. As a result, it is at the root of most popular literature (N. Frye 23), which may be defined as ". . . the literature that demands the minimum of previous verbal experience and special education from the reader" (N. Frye 26).

Romance, then, may be seen as an organizing or structural principle applied to the communication of experience. Romance literature is an act of reconciliation, uniting chaos and order in a manner which communicates our encounters with and response to both (N. Frye 31). Opposed to realism, which is focused primarily upon representing experience accurately, romance concentrates upon "the formulaic units of myth and metaphor" (N. Frye 37). It is about structure and images which are immediately recognizable for the reader and about those essential units of storytelling which we believe are the most important parts of who we are as a group.

I would suggest that this is an aspect of the genre which appeals to Montgomery. By employing a popular and easily accepted format for her novels, she can achieve success as a writer while at the same time exploring how marriage and the conventions of romance affect a young woman's self-determination.

The central concern of romance may be described as the search for identity, a universal human concern. Frye describes identity as ". . . a state of existence in which there is nothing to write about" (54), and thus asserts that romance begins with alienation from identity and ends with a return to the state of identity (54). Significantly, for many of Montgomery's heroines, this process functions in the reverse. The heroine's story begins with a state of identity and ends with alienation from this identity. Through this construction, Montgomery examines how a woman's experience of coming of age differs from a man's experience.

Romantic forms of literature, Katherine Sobba Green suggests, address significant issues in a woman's life, such as ". . . the emotional difficulties of moving toward affective individuation and . . . the regressive effects of female role definition. In this sense, the novel of courtship appropriated domestic fiction to feminist purposes" (2-3). By centring a story in the time of autonomy between a young woman's coming of age and her marriage, the author could draw attention to issues of sexual politics and gendered spheres of experience. I maintain that this is Montgomery's particular intent in the novels I have selected for this study.

Rachel M. Brownstein similarly proposes that ". . . the marriage plot [of the romantic novel] poses questions about how the sexual is bound up with the moral life, about the coexistence of intimacy and identity, about how very odd it is to choose another so as to choose a self . . ." (xvii). She argues that marriage for the heroine is not about subordination but about validation. Thus, the idea of being a heroine ". . . is to develop the beginnings of what feminists call a 'raised' consciousness: it liberates a woman from feeling (and therefore perhaps from being) a victim or a dependent or a drudge, someone of no account" (Brownstein xix). This is one way of interpreting Montgomery's novels. However, while the desire to be special may appear to be

resolved by the heroine's marriage, satisfying the literary conventions of the day, Montgomery also uses the vehicle of the romantic novel to argue for the heroine's fulfillment in other ways.

An understanding of archetypes and their role in women's literature is beneficial to our consideration of Montgomery's use of romance. Annis Pratt defines archetypes as ". . . images, symbols, and narrative patterns that differ from stereotypes in being complex variables, subject to variations in perception" (4). Analysis of archetypes has long been a part of the practice of literary criticism; however, Pratt asserts that the archetypes of women's fiction are unique, resulting from women's subordinate position in patriarchal society. Thus, she maintains that ". . . even the most conservative women authors create narratives manifesting an acute tension between what any normal human being might desire and what a woman must become. Women's fiction reflects an experience radically different from men's because our drive towards growth as persons is thwarted by our society's prescriptions concerning gender" (Pratt 6). The novels I have chosen reflect this tension between the heroine's desires and social constructions.

This tension highlights two significant concerns in women's writing, and in these novels in particular: the search for identity and the conflict between one's desire to find individual identity and society's desire to define women in relation to men. Pratt explains that ". . . when we seek an identity based on human personhood rather than on gender, we stumble about in a landscape whose signposts indicate retreats from, rather than ways to, adulthood. In existential terms, our desire for responsible selfhood is by definition selfish, deviating from norms of subservience to the dominant gender" (6).

This paradox has a particular impact upon the woman's novel of education, as the literature "provides models for 'growing down' rather than for 'growing up'" (Pratt 14). The

masculine novel of education sees the young *man*, through his experiences, finding independence and individuality, moving away from the restrictions of family toward social freedom. The woman's experience works in the reverse, as the young *girl* learns to satisfy social conventions, to identify herself in relation to others, and to put her energies into strengthening or creating new family bonds. Thus the heroine ". . . does not *choose* a life to one side of society after conscious deliberation on the subject; rather, she is radically alienated by gender-role norms *from the very outset*" (Pratt 36).

An examination of Montgomery's awareness of the constructions we have identified is furthered when her novels are viewed in conjunction with her journals and correspondence. The two mediums, public and private, are complementary. As Sylvia DuVernet asserts, "[a]ll her life L.M. Montgomery led a double life, a life divided between drama and reality, or Realism and Romance. . . . Reality embodied duty and with it, the fear of disobedience, the guilt that follows failure to live up to obligations" (5). We could extend this to suggest that Montgomery's double life was divided between the concerns of fiction and non-fiction. Thus, the reality of her private life must have had some influence upon the romance which constituted her public writings.

However, we must exercise care when approaching her private writings, especially because ". . . in the era when Montgomery wrote, a woman practised 'self-editing and self-censoring as a means of encoding messages' while maintaining a conventional perception of self in the text" (Buss *Decoding* 84). Therefore, the writer's message is transmitted in an oblique manner using techniques of "indirection, contradiction, deviation, and silences" (Buss *Decoding* 84). In particular, we must consider the "selective use of speech and silence" (Buss *Decoding* 84). What is said must be weighed against what is not being said. We must weigh carefully the times where

Montgomery expresses approval of the social conventions of the day against other instances where she fights against their constraints. Significantly, this conflict, and the semantic techniques employed in her journals to deal with it, are also central in her fiction.

If we pay careful attention to what Montgomery herself tells us, we will realize that she has provided the guidance we require; in essence, through her journals she has handed the reader the "key" to her writing. In 1904, Montgomery writes: "It is the *lonely* people who keep diaries' -- people who are living solitary lives and have no other outlets for their moods and tenses. When I have anybody to 'talk it over with' I don't feel the need of a diary so strongly. When I haven't I *must* have a journal to overflow in. It is a companion -- and a relief" (*Journals* 1.292). Because her journal functions as an outlet for intense or frustrated emotions, many of the influences upon both her life and her writing are recorded in its pages. It is the task of the reader to sort out the clues they contain and apply them to the texts in question.

Montgomery identifies her correspondence with her two closest pen pals, Mr. Ephraim Weber and Mr. G.B. MacMillan, as serving a similar function. Again in 1904 she writes in her journal: "If I lived where I could meet with intellectually congenial friends I suppose these correspondences would not mean so much to me. But under my present limitations these unseen friends are of vital interest to me. In my letters to them I 'let myself go' -- writing freely from my soul, with no fear of being misunderstood or condemned -- or worst of all, meeting with a blank wall of non-comprehension" (*Journals* 1.297). Thus her correspondence with these two aspiring writers, Canadian and Scottish respectively, stimulates her intellectual life and provides her with the opportunity for lively debates on a number of contentious issues, including gender relations.

Montgomery's personal writings, then, may be described as a map to the fiction. In her

examination of women's autobiography, Helen M. Buss explains that autobiographical writings are an attempt to map the world and our experience of it. She contends that ". . . mapping can be seen metaphorically as joining the activities of self-knowledge and knowledge of the world. Language 'maps' both the self and the coexistent world" (Buss *Mapping* 9). Language is about identity and how we form a sense of self and how we communicate that sense to others; how we use that language creates our map. However, it is important to remember when using this metaphor that "[a] map does not pretend to reflect the world . . ." (Buss *Mapping* 11); rather it represents our attempt to come to terms with the world and how we believe it relates to us. Maps are an element of our own subjectivity, and therefore they recreate the world as we experience it personally.

As a result, Montgomery's personal writings and her novels may be seen as two parts of a single map which, when put together, reflect her understanding of how she, and other women of her day, experienced the conflict between social expectations and individual desire. As Montgomery expresses it in a letter to Mr. Weber, ". . . I believe anyone's sphere -- whether man or woman -- is where they can be happiest and do the best work. The majority of women are happiest and best placed at home, just as the majority of men are in the world. But there are exceptions to *both*. . . . And each has a right to fulfil the purpose of their birth. Sex seems to me to enter very little into the question. There is no sex in mind . . ." (*Green Gables Letters* 91).

It is these constraints of gender which Montgomery addresses in her multi-levelled fiction. By layering the black and white prescriptions of social expectations, one over the other, she creates the shadows which characterize portions of her novels. In her autobiographical essay *The Alpine Path*, Montgomery reflects upon the romantic tales in popular magazines, which she read

and enjoyed as a child. She writes: "Every one in fiction was either black or white in those days. There were no grays. The villains and villainesses were all neatly labelled and you were sure of your ground. The old method had its merits. Nowadays it is quite hard to tell which is the villain and which the hero" (48). Although Montgomery sometimes expressed ambivalence toward some of the 'new' literature of her day, I maintain that much of her own work is painted in shades of gray. In other words, she, too, creates tales which blur the distinction between hero and villain.

What is Montgomery suggesting in this gray, shadowy area of the romantic tale? How are villain and hero being confused? If the novel has its focus on courtship and marriage, then the suitor who is labelled a hero may just as easily be a villain. This could have serious implications with regard to the heroine's future happiness. When the young woman's story concludes in marriage, have her desires really been fulfilled? Or has Montgomery hinted throughout that all may not be as it seems, that happily-ever-after should not be the focus of a woman's life?

Montgomery concludes *The Alpine Path* with these words: "We must follow our 'airy voices', follow them through bitter suffering and discouragement and darkness, through doubt and disbelief, through valleys of humiliation and over delectable hills where sweet things would lure us from our quest, ever and always must we follow, if we would reach the 'far-off divine event' and look out thence to the aerial spires of our City of Fulfillment" (95-96). If these words are words to live by, will her heroines reach the City of Fulfillment? It would seem that the women in question have missed the opportunity to see "the aerial spires."

The 'happily-ever-after' ending fails to satisfy as in each case the heroine's marriage also marks the necessity of leaving behind something else essential to both her identity and her happiness. Montgomery demonstrates that by restricting heroines to the domestic sphere, by

situating emotion and personal relationships at the heart of her experience, "[i]n the novel women are 'prisoners' of feeling and private life" (Stubbs x).

I contend that the very nature of Montgomery's act of fiction contains subversive -- or at least cautionary -- elements. In each of the novels I have selected for this study, Montgomery demonstrates how women diverge from and often conform to cultural expectations. Furthermore, Montgomery reveals how the heroine's ultimate acquiescence to the social constructions of romance and marriage has potentially damaging consequences. In chapter one, I will examine how the story of a mute girl is employed to explore the issues of voice, subjectivity and patriarchal authority. Chapter two will investigate how Montgomery makes use of her own experience of passion and romance to enhance the story of a spinster's love affair. In chapter three, I will analyze the heroine's struggle to overcome the constructions of romance and fashion herself as a hero. Chapter four will consider the heroine's attempt to create an independent identity for herself, free from the problems of sexual politics. Finally, in chapter five I will explore Montgomery's triumph over the conventions of romance by presenting a heroine who finds fulfillment outside of the institution of marriage. In the first four novels, the resolution of the heroine's romance suggests that she must forfeit her independence and her identity to the romantic hero. Only in the last novel does Montgomery move out of the shadows of convention and indicate that the heroine can find happiness and the comforts of domesticity outside of the bonds of matrimony.

Chapter One
"Through Masculine Eyes": Articulation and Representation in *Kilmeny of the Orchard*

Of all of Montgomery's novels, *Kilmeny of the Orchard* (1910) has received the least amount of critical attention. Those who have bothered to consider the novel have summarily dismissed it. Its critics have characterized it as a unexceptional example of formula romance (Scheckels 526; Epperly 228) or fairy tale (Scanlon 32). Consequently, it has been suggested that *Kilmeny* is "fervid in style, melodramatic in plot . . . follow[ing] a contemporary fad for books about psychosomatic impairment" (Waterston *LMM* 14), that it shows little "sophistication or irony" (Epperly 228), and furthermore, that it reinforces narrative patterns which "encourage female passivity" (Scheckels 526). However, I must argue that the novel is not "a variation of *Sleeping Beauty*" (Scanlon 32), that it does not end "with the promise of 'happily ever after'" (Scanlon 33), and that Kilmeny is not "unconsciously . . . searching for a male to occupy the dominant place in her life" (Scanlon 34). Furthermore, I question the belief that ". . . Kilmeny is almost overwhelmed with rewards: a voice, love, marriage, and riches" (Scanlon 37).

Certainly there are elements of *Kilmeny of the Orchard* which have their origin in formula romance and fairy tale, but these are superficial aspects of the text. Despite the novel's seemingly simplistic nature, a careful reading soon reveals that there is more to the novel than might first appear. The characters are not ". . . taken far too seriously by Montgomery and by themselves" (Scanlon 32); rather, we have failed to take them seriously enough. Contrary to Elizabeth Epperly's assertion that ". . . in telling the outline you have told almost all" (229), a close examination of the text reveals a disturbingly different tale of male domination and appropriation of voice.

In *Kilmeny of the Orchard*, we see Montgomery experimenting with technique. In a letter to her pen pal, Mr. MacMillan, she acknowledges that this book is "of a very different style from the *Anne* books" (*My Dear* 49), with a very different sort of heroine. She writes: "In my first book I had a heroine who talked all the time. In my third book I have one who cannot talk at all. Charlotte Brontë tried the experiment of making a *plain* heroine; there have been *blind* heroines; but as far as my memory goes, I don't think anyone ever ventured on a dumb heroine before" (*My Dear* 48). This statement indicates her intention to try something different, and furthermore, links her to a tradition of women writers, identified by the mention of Brontë, who portrayed women in a new way and who addressed the social issues which constrained women.

In the same letter, Montgomery gives another clue as to her intent in the novel. She indicates that the whole plot of *Kilmeny of the Orchard* ". . . grew out of this motif suggested by an old tale I had read somewhere of a boy at the court of Alexander the Great who couldn't speak until one day he saw his father in a position of great danger. 'Boy cannot speak because his mother would not.' When I came to write the story I saw how much more suggestive it would be to have the central figure a girl . . ." (*My Dear* 49). Here Montgomery is acknowledging that silence for women is an issue which requires further exploration. Scanlon suggests that ". . . the story of Kilmeny, dumb, represents for the author the working out of a personal problem centred on the ability to articulate" (33). Certainly the constraints upon speech are an issue for Montgomery, personally; however, I believe that she recognized this as an issue for all women, not just for the woman writer. Kilmeny's physiological silence is thus representative of the psychological silence of other women.

As Mary Rubio notes, "[w]hen she [Montgomery] harvested her imagination and

transformed it into textual gardens, she took the thistles from her own world and placed them strategically in her textual landscape," and thus skilfully ". . . fits her culturally significant discourse into the formulaic textual forms demanded by her publishers and audiences" (2). Consequently, while *Kilmeny of the Orchard* is superficially a formula romance, it simultaneously explores how the romantic ideal can have damaging consequences for a woman.

Kilmeny of the Orchard began as a periodical story entitled "Una of the Garden." While I am not concerned with the changes the text may have undergone in this transformation from story to novel, I believe that the title of the 'seed' holds a number of valuable clues for my reading of the text. To begin with, the heroine's name, Una, is an obvious echo of Spenser's Una in *The Faerie Queene*. From an allegorical perspective, Spenser's Una represents truth. A well-read woman, Montgomery would have been conscious of this in her selection of the heroine's name. It follows, then, that her heroine is trying to communicate a truth to the reader.

Una is carefully located in a garden, and gardens, in literature, have their origin in the first garden, Eden. Thus, Montgomery has created a parallel which links her tale not only to the Biblical garden, but to other representations of the Garden in literature. Even though the novel is set in an orchard, garden imagery pervades it. The title of Chapter VIII, "At the Gate of Eden" makes this correlation obvious. Significantly, the orchard of the novel's title is an apple orchard, creating a notable association with both Eden and Eve's act of eating the forbidden fruit.

Montgomery also makes use of religious imagery in her initial description of the orchard and its environs. The narrating voice describes a wood "smitten through with arrows of ruby light from the setting sun" (*KO* 27) and running up the middle of it "a long, purple aisle where the wood-floor was brown and elastic under his feet" (*KO* 27). The image is of a church in nature,

complete with stained glass and a carpeted aisle. This is emphasized again with the description of the air as being "very fragrant with the baptism of the dew" (*KO* 29). Thus the orchard is a holy place as we would expect Eden to be.

While God's garden it may be, Eden has fallen upon hard times. This is definitely a post-lapsarian world. It is

> . . . an old orchard, evidently long neglected and forsaken. But an orchard dies hard; and this one, which must have been a very delightful spot once, was delightful still, none the less for the air of gentle melancholy which seemed to pervade it, the melancholy which invests all places that have once been the scenes of joy and pleasure and young life, and are so no longer, places where hearts have throbbed, and pulses thrilled, and eyes brightened, and merry voices echoed. The ghosts of these things seem to linger in their old haunts through many empty years. (*KO* 27-28)

It is clear that Montgomery has carefully located her characters in a middle world, a place which is not quite paradise but also very clearly not the world of sin.

A very interesting construction begins to take shape here. A heroine in a garden must be linked somehow to the first garden's female inhabitant, Eve. Montgomery reveals her understanding of this, demonstrated by the title of Chapter IX, "The Straight Simplicity of Eve." The state of the garden reveals that its inhabitant is an Eve-figure after the fall. Thus, with connections made to both Una and Eve, we see juxtaposed two visions of the nature of woman: good and evil, or truth and disobedience.

One way to address these conflicting views is to examine the nature of the heroine in the

novel. While Kilmeny is a resident of the garden, she appears to be an innocent who has spent her life being obedient. However, the descriptions of her dead mother, Margaret, indicate that the older woman is the true Eve of the story. Margaret was "like a queen," "a little vain of her beauty," and "very proud" (*KO* 40). However, "[s]he could sing like an angel and she was very clever" (*KO* 41). But most significantly, Margaret Gordon was guilty of a number of sins. First, she was far too fond of her husband, as "[s]he gave him the worship it isn't right to give anybody but God . . . and . . . that is always punished" (*KO* 43). After Margaret found out that her husband was not really a widower as he had apparently believed, she was forced to return to the family home in shame. Being a hard man, Margaret's father called her an unkind name upon her return, and she reacted with silent "anger and rebellion and defiance" (*KO* 110). The family begged for forgiveness, but she stubbornly would not relent, even when her father was dying, and for this it was believed that Kilmeny was cursed with silence:

> 'And he prayed to Margaret to forgive him -- to forgive him and speak just one word to him before he went to meet her mother. . . . She would not! And yet she wanted to speak. But her stubbornness wouldn't let her. It was like some evil power that had gripped hold of her and wouldn't let go. Father might as well have pleaded with a graven image. Oh, it was hard and dreadful! She saw her father die and she never spoke the word he prayed for to him. That was her sin . . . and for that sin the curse fell on her unborn child.' (*KO* 112)

Thus Margaret is revealed as the disobedient Eve, and her sin of disobedience cursed her daughter Kilmeny to silence, just as the deeds of the original Eve cursed mankind to eternal toil. Kilmeny, then, is an innocent in a post-lapsarian garden, struggling to be redeemed, yet cursed to silence.

Kilmeny is not merely placed in nature, she is a part of it. As Pratt, building upon the theories of Simone de Beauvoir, explains, the adolescent girl has not acquired a "portion of the universal;" therefore Nature becomes "her kingdom as a whole" (17). This is certainly true for Kilmeny, who has experienced nothing beyond the orchard or her family home. Pratt perceives that "[n]ature . . . becomes an ally of the woman hero, keeping her in touch with her selfhood, a kind of talisman that enables her to make her way through the [delineations] of male society" (21). For Kilmeny, then, the orchard is a kind of touchstone, something upon which her identity is based and by which it is reaffirmed. Leaving the orchard, therefore, could be problematic for her sense of identity.

Without a doubt, Kilmeny qualifies as the archetypal romantic heroine, a "beautiful virgin walled off from an imperfect real world" who is "[e]nclosed in her garden" and represents "the good and the beautiful, spiritual perfection in palpable form" (Brownstein 35). As a heroine, Kilmeny is confronted with "her gender-determined destiny" and her story raises such questions as "whether intimacy and identity can be achieved at once" if at all (Brownstein xix). The issues of marriage and of retaining identity in association with men are central to the novel.

However, *Kilmeny of the Orchard* fails as a romance, by Radway's definition, because "[t]o qualify as a romance, the story must chronicle not merely the events of a courtship but *what it feels like* to be the *object* of one" (64). Because the narrative voice is both third-person restricted and masculine, any representation of Kilmeny's thoughts or emotions must be viewed as suspect. The reader never feels that she has come to know Kilmeny as a character or as a woman.

Because of this problem, Theodore Scheckels accuses Montgomery of "... retreat[ing] to structuring patterns that not only are not female but actually privilege the patriarchy" (525).

Certainly, the structure of the novel seems incongruent for a romantic tale, which is usually told from the perspective of the heroine. In fact, *Kilmeny of the Orchard*, with very few deletions, could be rewritten in the first person from the point of view of the 'hero.' In the novel, the primary focus of the narration is upon Eric's thoughts and reactions, a very limiting and subjective approach.

Even when events are purportedly presented from Kilmeny's perspective, we must remember that the narrating voice acts as a filter. For instance, even some of Kilmeny's written words are kept from the reader. Elizabeth Epperly complains that "[t]he narrator tells us that she writes little notes that show wit and humour, but we are never given any of these, and Kilmeny remains a beautiful picture . . ." (229). Certainly this is true. We are not given the details of Kilmeny's growing friendship with Eric. The narrator glosses over the idyllic three weeks when they are said to have met in the orchard each evening. Instead, the reader is presented with Eric's supposed growing understanding of Kilmeny. Eric, or perhaps the narrator as the construction here is unclear, observes of Kilmeny: "She was naturally quick and clever. Delightful little flashes of wit and humour sparkled out occasionally. She could be whimsical -- even charmingly capricious. Sometimes innocent mischief glimmered out in the unfathomable deeps of her blue eyes. Sarcasm, even, was not unknown to her. Now and then she punctured some harmless bubble of a young man's conceit or masculine superiority with a biting little line of daintily written script" (*KO* 62). There is power implicit in these words -- wit, mischief, sarcasm and the ability to puncture a young man's conceit -- which the masculine voice is being very careful to underrate. Thus it becomes obvious that the communication of Kilmeny's voice, whether in the form of the written word or her music, is very carefully controlled by the narrating voice.

Much of the reader's understanding of Kilmeny and of events which concern her is controlled by Eric, or by a narrator whose sympathies are clearly aligned with Eric. Eric has been described by critics as a "blameless," flawless, and "unreal" hero (Scanlon 34) whose "perfection" is the stuff of "fairy tale" (Jones 89). It has been suggested also that "[r]ich as he is, he can only introduce Kilmeny to the 'good things' of life, and she will never have to face ugliness or evil" (Scanlon 35-36). However, it must be remembered that all of the good things which are said about Eric are said either by himself or his friends. Because of the nature of the narrative, little of what we are told is objective. Furthermore, wealth may be associated with power as easily as with goodness. In fact, because he is rich and has led an easy life, Eric might be less likely to consider the needs of others over his own desires. The text certainly bears this out.

Eric's determination is well established in the first few pages. As his good friend David observes, "I'd as soon expect success in trying to storm the citadel single-handed as in trying to turn you from any course about which you had once made up your mind" (*KO* 5). This is emphasized again as Kilmeny's aunt says to Eric later in the novel, "You are one of those men who always get their own way. But that is different from the men who *take* their own way -- and that's a mercy" (*KO* 97). The implication here is that while he may not use force to get what he desires, he is decidedly not above manipulation. The consequences of this attitude are made clear by Eric's good-natured landlady who observes of his interest in Kilmeny, "I don't for a minute think that you would do her or any woman any wilful wrong. But you may do her great harm for all that" (*KO* 70). In his self-absorption, Eric will likely consider only his own needs and not hers.

In addition, he is decidedly class-conscious. When discussing what kind of woman he would consent to marry, Eric insists she must be "well-born, well-bred, and well-educated" (*KO*

8). In other words, she must be of his own kind. It quickly becomes apparent that appearance is very important in his world view. When describing his deceased mother, whom he obviously holds as a paragon of ideal womanhood, the focus is upon her "fine, strong, sweet face," the portrait of whom he sees as ". . . a testimony that she had been worthy of their love and reverence" (*KO* 12). This is the measurement he uses to evaluate everyone he meets. When observing the people of the village, Eric reveals that "[h]e rather prided himself on being a student of physiognomy . . ." (*KO* 19). For Eric, appearance is a certain indicator of character and personality.

As a result, when appraising women, beauty is Eric's only concern. Upon first meeting Kilmeny, he asserts that "[n]aturally a man liked to look at a pretty face" (*KO* 35). Similarly, when Mrs. Williamson asks him about his meeting with Kilmeny, all he says is "I thought her very beautiful" (*KO* 39). Later, when Kilmeny asks him about his ideal woman, he responds, "Oh, yes, I am sure I could never care for an ugly woman. . . . Our ideals are always beautiful . . ." (*KO* 65). This attitude clearly places women in the role of sex object.

Furthering this idea, when Kilmeny's uncle expresses concern about Eric's father approving of his proposed marriage, Eric responds, "I have often heard my father say that a man must marry to please himself. . . . If he felt tempted to go back on that opinion I think that sight of Kilmeny would convert him" (*KO* 89). This statement emphasizes physical beauty as the reason for his interest in Kilmeny, and implies that a woman's feelings are of no account in the decision to marry.

Eric is a self-centred man who sees things entirely from his own point of view. He cannot comprehend Kilmeny's fear when she first encounters him in the orchard; instead he feels hurt ". . . that any woman should look at him in such a fashion, at him who had always held womanhood in

such reverence" (*KO* 32). He cannot perceive that others would see him differently. When he tries to approach her, he speaks "as he would to a child" (*KO* 32), not only patronizing her, but ultimately placing her in a subordinate and powerless position.

Refusing to heed the kindly advice of Mrs. Williamson that ". . . marriage to Kilmeny Gordon [would] be an unwise thing from any standpoint" (*KO* 72), he listens to ". . . something stronger and greater and more vital than wisdom or unwisdom [which] rose up in him and mastered him" (*KO* 72), deciding that Kilmeny's "misfortune" would only make her "dearer" to him (*KO* 72). The 'something greater' is not identified. It could be love that prompts his decision that "[n]othing should part them" (*KO* 72), but it could just as easily be egoism or a need to satisfy his desire to possess, or the need to dominate. Certainly Eric is unwilling to accept Kilmeny's decisions or convictions. Instead of abiding by her decision not to marry him, and to stop seeing him, Eric firmly believes that "her love for him would eventually conquer" (*KO* 105) and continues to pressure her. Puffed up with his own importance, he questions David's assertion that Kilmeny could speak if she truly wanted to. Eric asserts that, "She loves me with all her heart and she won't marry me because she can't speak. Don't you suppose that a girl under such circumstances would 'want' to speak as much as any one could?" (*KO* 119). He has placed himself firmly at the centre of her universe, believing himself to be the most important factor in her life.

From the moment she is introduced, Kilmeny is being judged and classified by his standards. It is Eric who establishes for the reader the image of an ethereal child. He describes Kilmeny as possessing ". . . absolute, flawless purity, found in the angels and Madonnas of old paintings, a purity that held in it no faintest stain of earthliness" (*KO* 31). Kilmeny is further

objectified when he describes her as a part of nature, or as something which is not human. He says that her eyes are "as luminous as the stars" and her skin is "as fine and purely tinted as the heart of a white rose" (*KO* 31). Certainly these are conventionally romantic descriptors, but they serve both to deconstruct her and reconstruct her as Eric desires her to be. Later he describes her as ". . . a very incarnation of spring -- as if all the shimmer of young leaves and glow of young mornings and evanescent sweetness of young blossoms in a thousand springs had been embodied in her" (*KO* 48). Essentially, he has made her his desire incarnate. Even Eric is forced to admit that all of these descriptions are for the purpose of "pleasing his fancy" (*KO* 34). Thus the reader must question whether he has described the woman she is or the woman he wishes her to be.

Not only is Kilmeny likened to her environment, she is described as an animal. Eric says she "fled like a deer to cover" (*KO* 38) when she ran away from him in the garden. Then upon learning of her muteness, he reflects, "That beautiful creature afflicted in such a fashion -- why, it was horrible!" (*KO* 38). By classifying her in this manner, he has established himself as her evolutionary superior, positioning her as something below him over which he may exert control.

It is not enough that he judge her appearance; Eric believes that he can see into her soul. Knowing nothing about her, he reflects that "[e]yes like hers were never meant to express anything but tenderness and trust" (*KO* 33). He constructs her as a girl who is "utterly unskilled in the art of hiding her feelings" which he perceives to be "as pure and beautiful as herself" (*KO* 48). By presuming to evaluate her very nature, he is in fact placing himself in a god-like position.

Another way in which he establishes his superiority is by relegating her to the role of a child. Eric states, "She was, after all, nothing but a child -- and a child set apart from her fellow creatures by her sad defect" (*KO* 49). Here she is ranked even lower than an ordinary child

because she is an imperfect one. His constructed identity as adult and as 'perfect' thus provides his justification for taking control of her life. While the critics label Eric's 'princely perfection' as a flaw in the novel, this perfection is not real. It is a creation and masks his egoism and his grasping nature.

Yet despite the fact that he views Kilmeny as a child, Eric sees nothing incongruous in placing her in the rôle of enchantress, all womanly seduction. He tells himself that at times she is "as old as Eve" because "[a]n expression would leap into her laughing face, a subtle meaning reveal itself in her smile, that held all the lore of womanhood and all the wisdom of the ages" (*KO* 62). Thus he has given himself permission to view her as a sex object regardless of all of the ethereal, natural, animalistic and child-like descriptors he continues to apply to her.

The novel's narrative bias places an emphasis upon voice and representation, which have been identified by critics as significant concerns in literature by women. As Lorna Irvine explains, "[m]etaphorically immanent and spatially restricted, women . . . have been trained to see themselves through masculine eyes; that is, to split themselves in order to view themselves objectively" (5). Montgomery demonstrates this aspect of gender construction through her use of a subjective, seemingly male narrating voice.

This focus upon representation highlights the issue of articulation. The heroine of the novel is presented as the patriarchy perceives her, not as she perceives herself. As Irvine points out, in women's literature "[v]oice is emphasized. . . . Silence and noise contrast to elicit ironic attitudes to the traditional conflict between the word and the silent woman" (14). Montgomery has made this concern concrete in her creation of a mute heroine. In the novel, silence is both a real and a metaphorical constraint for the heroine.

Consequently, Kilmeny's lack of a 'real' voice is a central issue in the novel. Physically, there is no impediment to speech. The difficulty is attributed even by Kilmeny to the disobedient actions of her mother: "I asked mother once and she told me it was a judgement on her for a great sin she had committed, and she looked so strangely that I was frightened, and I never spoke of it to her or anyone else again" (*KO* 58). Kilmeny has been silenced even on the issue of her silence.

Janice Kulyk-Keefer explains that for Maritime women there was ". . . constant pressure . . . to keep silence, or at least, to use as few and as simple words as possible in their daily living" (241). Montgomery, who experienced these constraints growing up, demonstrates this pressure in her first novel *Anne of Green Gables*, and then reexamines the issue in *Kilmeny of the Orchard*.

Judith Miller's evaluation of *Emily Climbs* reveals similar concerns and could just as easily be applied to *Kilmeny*. She writes, "Montgomery did not have the luxury of direct speech -- especially not on issues of the values of a young woman's life. She spoke indirectly. Her novel has the superficial appearance of an idyllic novel of girlhood, but a careful reader will see something else" (158). She further perceives that "[t]he juxtapositions of voices and silences create a complex viewpoint on the struggle of a young woman . . . to find *her* voice" (Miller 158). Superficially idyllic, *Kilmeny* clearly reveals how social constructions can serve to silence a woman.

Yeast further suggests that "Montgomery's early fiction often idealizes the norms of her society, thereby engaging in patriarchal complicity. Because women in these books usually 'choose' to be silent, ladylike, and subservient, the heroines ultimately finding contentment in quiet subordination, it is easy not to notice exactly what is happening to them" (*Articulating* 71). However, Kilmeny has not chosen to be silent; rather, she communicates in a different voice,

revealing how even when women do speak, they are frequently misunderstood.

David, a medical specialist who is a friend of Eric, asserts that Kilmeny could speak if she truly wanted to. All she requires, in his opinion, is ". . . a sudden, vehement, passionate inrush of desire, physical, psychical, mental, all in one, mighty enough to rend asunder the invisible fetters that hold her speech in bondage" (*KO* 119). Once Kilmeny's voice is 'found,' Eric or the narrator -- again it is unclear -- reflects that "[s]he spoke naturally and easily. The only difficulty which she seemed to experience was in the proper modulation of her voice. Occasionally she pitched it too high -- again, too low. But it was evident that she would soon acquire perfect control of it" (*KO* 128). This difficulty is paradigmatic of the problems of self-expression women encounter. Because women are consigned to pay the price for being the daughters of a disobedient Eve, their speech is restricted to those matters and those occasions deemed to be socially appropriate. While it is easy to say that freedom of speech requires only a great desire on the part of the speaker, social constructions still act as fetters, restricting effective and rewarding communication.

Jeanne Perreault suggests that "[i]f death is silence then life must be (in part at least) language, and giving the self in language, or to language, is a death-defying act" (qtd. in Yeast *Articulating* 88-89). Conversely, Kilmeny is a whole woman when she is without the use of spoken language, and becomes a shadow of herself once able to articulate as other women do, revealing that language, if not free, can be as damaging as silence. Rather than perceiving that "Kilmeny is imprisoned by her inability to talk as well as by the boundaries of her orchard . . . " (Scanlon 33), I would suggest that ultimately it is speech which imprisons her. Her acquisition of speech means that she no longer has an excuse not to marry Eric, having promised him: ". . . when

I can speak like other women I will marry you" (*KO* 114). This is significant because "[c]losure achieved through a traditional plot ending means silence and enclosure in marriage ..." (Yeast *Articulating* 107). In marriage, Kilmeny will truly be a silent partner.

This issue of voice and silence must, by necessity, include an analysis of the rôle of Kilmeny's music as a form of communication. In a letter to Mr. MacMillan, Montgomery writes: "You ask if I like music. Yes, I like music very much. That temperate sentence exactly expresses my attitude towards it. Music does *not* mean to me what it means to those who love it as you do. I regret this because no doubt I lose a great deal by reason of it" (*My Dear* 13). Thus, while it does not move her personally to the extent that it does some, Montgomery has acknowledged the emotive power of music, its ability to communicate on some level with the soul. She has incorporated this understanding of the nature of music in the character of Kilmeny.

The mute girl communicates elementally with her music. Upon first hearing her music from a distance, Eric describes it as "beautiful and fantastic" (*KO* 29) as if "played by some hand inspired with the very spirit of harmony" (*KO* 30). It is like nothing he has heard before: ". . . he believed that the wonderful music was coming straight from the soul of the unseen violinist, and translating itself into those most airy and delicate and exquisite sounds for the first time; the very soul of music, with all sense and earthliness refined away" (*KO* 30). He further interprets the music of the violin as "a pitiful, plaintive cry as of some imprisoned thing calling for freedom and utterance" (*KO* 30). From the beginning, before he has seen Kilmeny -- much less learned of her muteness -- Eric has placed himself in the role of both interpreter and rescuer, a position which he maintains until the end of the novel.

Kilmeny likens the music of her violin to speech. When asked if she was taught the piece

of music she played, Kilmeny responds, "It just came as I thought. It has always been that way" (*KO* 51). Her music flows like thought and Kilmeny is untutored beyond having been shown how to hold the bow. In other words, the music is created and transmitted in the same manner as speech. However, because those around her do not communicate using the same language, accurate communication is difficult. When Kilmeny asks Eric to put into words what her melody said to him, his paraphrase is correct only to a degree. As she puts it, "That was just what I meant. Of course I did not think it in just those words, but that was the *feeling* of it" (*KO* 55).

Eric believes that the music of Kilmeny's violin has given him the key to her universe and her soul. He likens the sounds of her violin to ". . . music such as the stars of morning might have made singing together, music that the fairies might have danced to in their revels among the green hills or on yellow sands, music that might have mourned over the grave of a dead hope . . ." (*KO* 56). This perspective places Kilmeny in an ephemeral universe of things untouchable. Yet at the same time, Eric presumes that ". . . the whole soul and nature of the girl were revealing themselves to him through her music -- the beauty and purity of her thoughts, her childhood dreams and her maiden reveries. There was no thought of concealment about her; she could not help the revelation she was unconscious of making" (*KO* 57). He places himself in the privileged, god-like position of being able to see into her very consciousness.

Simultaneously, Eric expresses a belief that Kilmeny's music is a talent like any other: "This child, he told himself as he listened, had genius" (*KO* 56). Consequently, it is something to be exercised and developed. Placing himself in the role of mentor, "Eric promised himself that when she was his wife her wonderful gift of music should be cultivated to the utmost" (*KO* 94). This attitude is a precursor to the appropriation of her unique and individual voice. His plan will

successfully silence the only genuine form of expression which she possesses.

This process of appropriation begins almost immediately. The more involved in her life Eric becomes, the more difficulty Kilmeny has in expressing herself through music. In essence, she is losing her voice. When Eric fails to meet her in the orchard one night she discovers that "[she] couldn't even play. [She] tried to, and [her] violin only cried" (*KO* 76). This difficulty continues. We observe her one night as "she laid aside the violin with a little frown" (*KO* 103). Following this the narrator remarks that "[i]t might have been that she was afraid to play -- afraid that her new emotions might escape her and reveal themselves in music. . . . The necessity for restraint irked her and made of her bow a clumsy thing which no longer obeyed her wishes. More than ever at that instant did she long for speech -- speech that would conceal and protect where dangerous silence might betray" (*KO* 104). From Kilmeny's perspective, spoken language is more selective than musical communication. Because of the constructions of language, she believes that in speaking, unlike in music, she may omit what she does not want to say. Never having been able to speak, and never without her violin, she does not yet realize how important articulation is in establishing one's identity.

Articulation may be seen as the communication of one's sense of self. Thus Kilmeny innocently asks Eric, "You like me because of my beautiful music, don't you?" (*KO* 67). She perceives her music as her most attractive feature. She is unaware of her own physical beauty, and in fact has been told by her mother that she is ugly. Kilmeny says, "It hurts me much worse to know I am ugly than it does to know I cannot speak" (*KO* 66). This reveals the importance of appearance in a woman's relationships with society. Kilmeny's lack of a voice can be hidden or replaced by the sound of the violin, but physical beauty cannot. She reveals to Eric, "I have never

looked in a mirror. . . . But I have seen my face reflected in the spoons and in a little silver sugar bowl Aunt Janet has. And it *is* ugly -- very ugly" (*KO* 66-67). This distorted reflection is indicative of her distorted perception of her exterior self.

Eric takes it upon himself to create a physical identity for Kilmeny: "He went to Janet and asked her permission to bring a mirror to the house that he might have the privilege of being the first to reveal Kilmeny to herself exteriorly" (*KO* 96). Thus, he appropriates not only her voice, both violin and vocal chords, but attempts also to appropriate her appearance. It would seem that in this endeavour, at least, he is not successful. The imagery of the mirror episode is truly intriguing, and serves as an example of how Montgomery subtly subverts romantic conventions and asserts female self-determination.

Eric plans to present the mirror to Kilmeny ceremoniously, and sends her upstairs to put on a flattering dress. She descends the stairs again wearing ". . . a trailing, clinging dress of some creamy tinted fabric that had been her mother's" (*KO* 99-100), a description which sounds suspiciously like a wedding gown. While she is not wearing a veil, she is crowned like a regal bride: "She had crossed her long braids at the back and pinned them about her head like a coronet" (*KO* 100). At the bottom of the stairs, Eric hands her a bouquet of flowers: "Take these lilies on your arm, letting their bloom fall against your shoulder -- so" (*KO* 100). This reinforces the matrimonial flavour of the scene as lilies are a traditional wedding flower. Taking her hand, Eric leads her into the parlour and up to the mirror where "she saw herself reflected" (*KO* 100). In this scene, Eric assumes the role of father of the bride and the mirror stands as the groom waiting for her. Even her interaction with the mirror is like that of a new bride to her groom; "[s]he was blushing now, and stealing shy radiant glances at the mirror" (*KO* 101), and then "[s]he

blew an airy little kiss at her mirrored face and turned from it, smiling happily" (*KO* 101). Significantly, in this scene Kilmeny marries her own identity as a woman rather than marrying man.

This is especially significant when we consider that even once she has agreed to marry Eric, Kilmeny puts off the wedding date in favour of education. She says, "There are so many things that I must learn yet before I shall be ready to be married" (*KO* 131). While this could be viewed as Kilmeny's need to meet societal expectations, these things could be learned after her marriage. Thus, her postponement could also be seen as a delaying tactic, a putting off of the subordination of her female identity to a man's construction of that identity.

The maturation of the body is also significant in establishing identity as it is closely tied to gender expectations. As Jennie Rubio points out, "[t]he young girl . . . must learn the language of the body: she begins to worry about her clothes, her hair, and her face. Her body becomes the site of many competing discourses: the power to control her outer appearance is one of the most important powers open for negotiation" (39). Because the body is culturally constructed, changes in body language also affect verbal communication: ". . . it [the body] has been colonized by culture, forced to speak in a foreign language. Finding herself caught in this web of non-verbal communication, the young girl begins to find herself split between her mind and body. She can no longer directly articulate her desires and her imagination: instead, she must learn the appropriate language of her gender" (J. Rubio 40). There is an obvious connection between the body, the articulation of self and the speech act, a relationship which is made concrete in the novel through Kilmeny's muteness.

As she struggles to find a new balance within this construction, the young girl is

increasingly vulnerable to shame: ". . . it is the shame of being socially inadequate, of not being able to conform and losing one's place in the community. Feeling shame reflects the new, confusing, foreign boundaries of the body, and the danger of being illiterate in the language with which it is inscribed" (J. Rubio 40-41). Kilmeny reveals her awareness of this difficulty after her first meeting with Eric. She explains her fear and her need to flee from him by saying, "I did not want you to think I did not know how to behave" (*KO* 50).

The kiss between Eric and Kilmeny is also revealing. As Leslie Goddard Scanlon suggests, it may be seen to mark "the end of her girlhood" (36) and make her "aware of her sexuality" (37). More than this, however, the scene is disturbing in the power relationships it reveals. Eric is prompted by "an impulse of tenderness which he could not control" (*KO* 79) and in response Kilmeny "started back with a little cry" (*KO* 79) and fled. Lack of control and fear do not make for a loving picture. Furthermore, the kiss is described as "involuntary" and "half-intoxicating" (*KO* 79), a description which implies both force and inebriation with power. This is a very one-sided encounter. And while Eric asserts that he has "opened the gates of womanhood to Kilmeny" (*KO* 79) -- ambiguous as that is -- he also senses that "her eyes [would never again] meet his with their old unclouded frankness" (*KO* 79). There is a sense of violation and abuse of his power here, as well as the implication that Kilmeny has left childhood behind and become a woman because, ultimately, she has recognized that she is helpless in the face of masculine domination.

Significantly, on their next meeting after this incident, Kilmeny does not run eagerly to meet Eric; rather ". . . she only put out her right hand with a pretty dignity and, while she looked into his face, she did not look into his eyes" (*KO* 90-91). Although Eric perceives this to be

comely and womanly dignity, it could also be a mark of her fear of him and reluctance to be alone in his company. This is implied in one of the few insights the narrator gives us into Kilmeny's thoughts: "The kiss which Eric had left on her lips, the words her uncle and aunt had said to her, the tears she had shed for the first time on a sleepless pillow -- all had conspired to reveal her to herself" (*KO* 91). What exactly this implies is not clear in the passage, although Kilmeny muses further that "[s]he was no longer the child to be made a dear comrade of" (*KO* 91). I would suggest the implication is that this shift in the balance of power has revealed to her that as a woman she will no longer receive the gentle care of yesterday, and yet even as an adult she will not be considered an equal.

The conclusion of the novel clearly demonstrates how the constructions of courtship and romance have affected Kilmeny. She is reduced to everything that Eric wishes her to be. Kilmeny, at the last glimpse of her, is beautiful and demure, and most importantly, silenced. Eric observes, "She stood and came shyly forward to meet them. . . . As she approached Eric saw with a thrill of exultation that she had never looked lovelier. . . . She looked like a young princess . . ." (*KO* 134). Both men obviously perceive her appearance as being her only significant attribute. Her violin is nowhere to be seen, and while she may have acquired a 'voice' in the physiological sense, she is quieter than ever: "Kilmeny held out her hand with a shyly murmured greeting" (*KO* 134). The men, Eric and his father, do all of the talking. It is obvious, even without the chapter title, "Victor From Vanquished Issues," that Eric believes he has won the fight -- that is, courtship -- and walked away with the prize, an objectified Kilmeny. Montgomery's concluding line for the novel describes how "Eric turned abruptly away to hide his emotion and on his face was a light as of one who sees a great glory widening and deepening

down the vista of his future" (*KO* 134). This emotion seems to be triumph, and his glory seems to be that he has acquired a beautiful and voiceless -- in the socially acceptable sense -- princess for a wife, a feminine picture to grace his family home in the same way that the picture of his mother has graced it.

Before leaving our discussion of the novel, we must address the issue of the heroine's name: Kilmeny. By prefacing her novel with an excerpt from the "Kilmeny" portion of James Hogg's poem, "The Queen's Wake," Montgomery has made it quite clear that her heroine is somehow related to the poetical figure of the same name. In the poem, Kilmeny, an example of perfect and virginal womanhood, "For Kilmeny was pure as pure could be" (Hogg 4), is transported to the world of faerie, ". . . a land where sin had never been; / A land of love and a land of light" (Hogg 45-46). She is introduced to its wonders and told that even if she returns to the mortal world, she will always have a place in faerie-land, providing that she remains pure and untouched by love for a man. She later leaves faerie-land in order

> To warn the living maidens fair,
> The loved of heaven, the spirits' care
> That all whose minds unmeled remain
> Shall bloom in beauty when time is gane. (Hogg 268-271)

However, once returned to the 'world of sin', Kilmeny "... loved to raike the lanely glen, / And keep afar frae the haunts of men, / Her holy hymns unheard to sing" (Hogg 290-292). She no longer belongs in the mortal world, and thus

> When a month and a day had come and gane,
> Kilmeny sought the greenwood wene;

There laid her down on the leaves sae green.

And Kilmeny on earth was never mair seen.

. . .

She left this world of sorrow and pain,

And returned to the land of thought again. (Hogg 320-330)

This is an incongruous association in a novel that purports to be a romance. In the poem, the heroine has learned to spurn mortal love and remain pure, returning to the land of faerie because she cannot abide 'the haunts of men.' If the Kilmeny of the novel is like her namesake, this leaves the reader to wonder what is to become of Kilmeny's marriage to Eric. Can Kilmeny leave the orchard and survive, or must she return to the natural surroundings of her birth?

The irony of Kilmeny's name is increased each time the characters make reference to or recite passages from the poem. Eric muses idly to Kilmeny, "Your namesake of the poem was a somewhat uncanny maid, if I recollect aright" (*KO* 65), but seems unaware that the object of his love is an uncanny woman, too. He also seems oblivious to the parallel between the Kilmeny of legend reentering the mortal world and his Kilmeny's isolation from the greater part of this same world, and the difficulty she will experience when trying to assimilate.

Even when making a direct comparison between the two women, Eric fails to take the comparison to its logical conclusion. He does not recognize that Kilmeny might also wish to remain untouched. He observes that:

> She did not run to meet him while he was crossing the pasture, as she would once have done. She waited motionless until he was close to her. Eric began, half laughingly, half tenderly, to quote some lines from her namesake ballad:

'Kilmeny, Kilmeny, where have you been?

. . .

Where got you that joup o' the lily sheen?

That bonny snood o' the birk sae green,

And those roses, the fairest that ever was seen?

Kilmeny, Kilmeny, where have you been?' [Hogg 25-32]

'Only it's a lily and not a rose you are carrying. I might go on and quote the next couplet too -- '

'Kilmeny looked up with a lovely grace,

But there was nae smile on Kilmeny's face.' [Hogg 33-34]

'Why are you looking so sober?'

Kilmeny did not have her slate with her and could not answer; but Eric guessed from something in her eyes that she was bitterly contrasting the beauty of the ballad's heroine with her own supposed ugliness. (*KO* 98-99) [italics mine]

Eric might find a more sufficient explanation further on in the poem. The verse continues: "For Kilmeny had been, she kenned not where, / And Kilmeny had seen what she could not declare" (Hogg 38-39). Thus the Kilmeny of the novel may not be concerned about her looks as Eric assumes, but may be concerned about where this growing friendship may take her, and what the eventual consequences will be.

An earlier reference to Kilmeny's attitude toward the outside world seems to bear this out. Eric reflects that, ". . . it was plain to be seen that she did not regard it [the outside world] as anything she might ever share herself. Hers was the dispassionate interest with which she might

have listened to a tale of the land of fairy or of some great empire long passed away from earth" (*KO* 52). From the beginning of the story, Kilmeny expresses no interest in leaving the orchard for the outside world. As the story nears its conclusion, a further comparison is drawn between Kilmeny and her namesake. Here their experiences are implicitly paralleled:

> Eric noticed a change in Kilmeny at their next meeting -- a change that troubled him. She seemed aloof, abstracted, almost ill at ease. . . . Kilmeny seemed as far away from him as if she had in truth, like her namesake of the ballad, sojourned for seven years in the land 'where rain never fell and the wind never blew,' and had come back washed clean from all the affections of earth. (*KO* 103)

This ethereal, aloof Kilmeny is very like the maiden of the poem. If she is removing herself from man, it would seem that she wishes to follow the advice which the poetical Kilmeny is given and remain untouched by love, aware that by giving up her purity she is giving up her place in the land of thought. If she is the daughter of Eve, seeking redemption from her mother's sins, this would be a logical conclusion.

Certainly there are physical parallels between the environments of Eden, the land of faerie, and Kilmeny's orchard. Furthermore, all three of these worlds are exemplified by their spiritual purity and their freedom from sin. However, there are significant differences between the characterizations of their female inhabitants. James Hogg's Kilmeny is as virtuous as the land of thought. The post-lapsarian Eve can be seen as the incarnation of sin. Montgomery's Kilmeny occupies a middle realm. Her identification as a daughter of Eve implies a predisposition to sin, while her link with the spiritually pure, poetical Kilmeny implies a potential to rise above the corruption of the physical world.

It is this paradoxical construction which advances Montgomery's theme in *Kilmeny of the Orchard*. Kilmeny symbolizes the patriarchal representations of feminine nature as fallen or angelic. However, Montgomery exploits this duality of daughter of Eve and faerie child, not to comment upon Kilmeny's nature or morality, but to suggest her fate in the hands of the patriarchy. It is clear that in the outside world, Kilmeny can be one of two things: pure and untouched or fallen. If she marries, she will become a sexual being and must leave the world of thought for the world of the senses.

Thus, Elizabeth Epperly's conclusion that "Kilmeny is not [human]" (230), while intended to point to Montgomery's failure to create a believable heroine, reminds us that Kilmeny may be more akin to the spiritual realm than she is to the physical. If Kilmeny belongs more accurately to the land of thought than to the mortal world, how will she fare when she is forced to leave the orchard and join the 'haunts of man'? If Kilmeny is like her legendary namesake, then romance is the precursor of her spiritual death.

Chapter Two
"Had Fate Been Kinder": Imaginative Rewriting of Romance in *The Blue Castle*

Like *Kilmeny of the Orchard*, Montgomery's adult novel *The Blue Castle* (1926) has received very little serious analysis. What attention it has received has been, for the most part, an attempt to classify the work. Theodore Scheckels asserts that the novel "subverts the formula romance by parodying it" (532). Elizabeth Epperly takes a slightly different approach to the novel. While she admits that *The Blue Castle* has "the shape of formula romance," she perceives that "there is as much liberating fairy tale as limiting formula" and this, in her view, indicates that the work more accurately belongs to "romance fiction" (235). The most positive commentary comes from Elizabeth Waterston, who asserts that "*The Blue Castle* is energetic and tough. It is an amazingly blunt story of a frustrated woman's attempt to find a real life in defiance of family tabus and conventions. It has a Cinderella plot, but the settings and characters mark a definite break from cliché" (*LMM* 20). This evaluation seems to imply that the novel takes the form of a quest, combining both realism and romance.

These reviews give Montgomery credit for some measure of success. Others, however, are much less flattering. Helen Porter calls *The Blue Castle* "the least memorable of all of the Montgomery books" (102), while Muriel Whitaker labels it "pure corn" and reminiscent of the Perils-of-Pauline (54). Whitaker further asserts that although "[i]t is tempting to exculpate L.M. Montgomery by reading *The Blue Castle* as a parody of romance rather than as a serious attempt at the genre, . . . I cannot quite convince myself that such is the case" (54). These critics appear to recognize that there is something unsettling about the novel, but not knowing what to make of it, they dismiss the work as a failure.

What exactly was Montgomery's purpose in writing *The Blue Castle*? When viewed from the perspective of genre or plot, it certainly may be described as both frustrating and disappointing. The contrived romantic ending, particularly when juxtaposed with the dark reminders of death throughout the novel, leaves the reader ambivalent. Denyse Yeast comes closest to an answer in her recognition that Montgomery's novels ". . . although generically fiction, can also be considered as autobiographical tools" (*Articulating* 5). However, in the case of *The Blue Castle*, I would take this one step further and assert that Montgomery is using the structure of the novel as a way to rewrite imaginatively a portion of her lived experience. There is evidence within her personal writings to indicate that this may be the case.

In 1911, early in her career, Montgomery asserts: ". . . I have *never* drawn any of the characters in my books 'from life,' although I may have taken a quality here and an incident there. I have used real places and speeches freely but I have never put any person I knew into my books" but she qualifies the statement in saying "I may do so some day . . ." (*Journals* 2.38). Thus, she has acknowledged that if it suited her creative purposes she would not be averse to situating a real person, or persons, in a fictional work.

At the time of the novel's inception and creation, Montgomery was in the process of transcribing her earlier journals into a set of matched volumes. As Margaret Turner points out, "[i]n this process she conflates the roles of reader and writer -- as she is writing in the present she is reading and living in the past, which then enters the present as a sometimes lengthy reflection on the place, person, or event she is engaged with in memory" (95). Montgomery herself alludes to this in a 1919 entry: "I find that when I am copying those old journals I feel as if I had gone back into the past and were living over again the events and emotions of which I write" (*Journals*

2.341). I believe that this process had a significant influence upon her fiction.

At this same point in her life, Montgomery was experiencing an increased sense of loneliness and isolation. She writes: "The truth is, I'm starving for a little companionship. For eight weeks I've been mewed up here without one living soul near me who is any kin whatever to the race of Joseph. Ewan, in his present quiet, dull state of mind is rather worse than no company at all. So I'm utterly alone . . ." (*Journals* 2.357). As a result of his frequent bouts of religious melancholia, Ewan Macdonald inhabited a world completely removed from that of his wife. With great distances separating her from her family, Montgomery had no one else to rely upon for support.

Throughout her life, Montgomery dealt with her isolation and despair by retreating into the world of the imagination. As she explains in a 1920 entry: "This power of mine [for imaginary adventures] has been all that has saved me many times in my life from absolute break-down. I can imagine things so vividly that it seems to me almost exactly the same as if I were *living* them, and it has the same, or largely the same stimulating physical effect on me as the real adventures would have -- I really thrill and glow and delight and exult -- and so I have always been able to escape from 'intolerable reality' and save my nerves by a double life" (*Journals* 2.368). Thus, Montgomery is living on two planes: the physical and the mental/emotional. In an entry written the following year, she explains that the latter plane of experience often takes her into the past: "So I sit alone, not even having old Daffy for company now -- alone with books and dreams. For dream I still -- I must or die -- dream back into the past and live life as I might have lived it -- had Fate been kinder" (*Journals* 2.398). Thus, Montgomery's imaginary life sometimes takes the form of rewriting her past to reflect how she would have liked to have lived it.

How, then, can this be related to *The Blue Castle* in particular? Again, her autobiographical writings may be offered as evidence. In a letter to her pen pal Ephraim Weber, Montgomery writes: "I've just roused up from a long twilight visit to my castle in Spain. For the past hour I have been lying on a couch in my den beside a dying fire -- that is, my *body* was lying there but my soul was far away in a dreamland of imagination, where everything lost or missed in my present existence is mine. What a blessing it is that we can so *dream into* life the things we desire!" (*Green Gables Letters* 37). This Spanish estate of her creation sounds very like the Blue Castle of Valancy Stirling's imagination. Furthermore, the Muskoka reality of the Blue Castle seems to have had its origin in another of Montgomery's forays into the imagination. In a 1922 entry in her journal, she writes:

> I had a very lovely forenoon. The boys were with Ewan so I sat alone -- and -- dreamed. I picked out an island that just suited me. I built thereon a summer cottage and furnished it *de luxe*. I set up a boat-house and a motor launch. I peopled it with summer guests -- Frede, Aunt Annie, Stella. . . . We spent a whole idyllic summer there together. Youth -- mystery -- delight, were all ours once more. I lived it all out in every detail; we swam and sailed and fished and read and built camp fires under the pines -- I saw to it that I had an island with pines -- and dined gloriously at sunset *al fresco*, and then sat out on moonlit porches . . . -- and always we talked -- the soul satisfying talk of kindred spirits. . . . (*Journals* 3.63)

Two very interesting things are revealed here. First of all, the inhabitants of the Muskoka Blue Castle do not have to be alive in Montgomery's present, as is revealed by the mention of her

cousin Frede who died in the post-war influenza epidemic. Secondly, there is a marked emphasis on the desire for fulfilling communication. Both of these are significant elements in her imaginative rewriting.

Finally, there are three comments Montgomery makes in her journal with regard to *The Blue Castle* which reveal that the novel is closely related to 'dream lives' and 'imaginary adventures.' First of all, in 1924 she reflects that she is ". . . finding much pleasure in writing [her] new book *The Blue Castle*" (*Journals* 3.209). This is unique, as she often found that the pressures and constraints of production made writing a trial and not a pleasure. In 1925 she reveals that the writing of the novel ". . . seemed a refuge from the cares and worries of [her] real world" (*Journals* 3.218), and furthermore that she is: ". . . sorry it is done. It has been for several months a daily escape from a world of intolerable realities" (*Journals* 3.222). Thus the writing of *The Blue Castle* was a pleasurable escape from reality, and a balm for her spirit.

If Montgomery found this consolation in imaginatively rewriting the past, what part of her life would she most feel the need to rewrite? Which incident would be better resolved by the logic of fantasy than by the logic of reality? What would provide her with an escape from the 'intolerable realities' of her life? Whom would she wish to bring out of the mists of time and place in her enchanted Blue Castle? The emphasis in the novel on both love and passion provides the clue to this puzzle. As is revealed by her journals from the turn of the century, the most passionate period of Montgomery's life was her love affair with Herman Leard. However, the logic of reality, being the need to find a husband who was suitable in terms of class and intellect, meant that Montgomery could not marry her only passionate love. His death a few years after their affair ensured that they would never meet again. Yet these difficulties could be resolved in

the imaginary world of the novel.

The character of Barney certainly seems to be a recreation and a rewriting of Herman Leard. Montgomery describes Herman as ". . . slight, rather dark, with magnetic blue eyes. He does not impress one as handsome at first -- when I met him I thought he was what might be called insignificant looking -- but in the end one thinks him so" (*Journals* 1.203). She also felt that there was ". . . something wonderfully fascinating about his face. What it was I could not define. It was elusive, magnetic, haunting; whether it lay in expression or feature could not be told" (*Journals* 1.208-209). Similarly, Valancy believes Barney's face to be "the most interesting one [she] ever saw" (*BC* 63). She takes note of ". . . his twisted, enigmatic, engaging smile, his twinkle, his thin, sensitive, almost ascetic lips, his general air of frank daredeviltry" (*BC* 65). As she begins to fall in love with him, she remarks that "[h]is eyes, which she had always thought brown, now seen close were deep violet -- translucent and intense. Neither of his eyebrows looked like the other. . . . There was *something* in his face -- one hardly knew what it was. Tiredness? Sadness? Disillusionment? He had dimples in his thin cheeks when he smiled" (*BC* 90). With regard to temperament, Montgomery paints Herman as "jolly and full of fun" (*Journals* 1.209), a sentiment which is echoed in Valancy's description of Barney's "little, whimsical grin that gave him the look of an amused gnome" (*BC* 28). The only differences between the two men seem to be hair and eye colour, a difference more of degree than of kind. Barney has "reddish, tawny hair" (*BC* 5), whereas Herman is 'rather' dark. Barney has violet eyes as compared to Herman's eyes of 'magnetic blue.' Yet what is most important in these descriptions is the similarity of both tone and points of interest.

In the description of intellect, we see the effects of Montgomery's creative rewriting of the

past. She is quite frank in her acknowledgement of Herman's shortcomings. She writes: "He had no trace of intellect, culture, or education -- no interest in anything beyond his farm and the circle of young people who composed the society he frequented. In plain, sober truth, he was only a very nice, attractive young animal! And yet!!" (*Journals* 1.209). But when Herman is transformed into Barney, he becomes "a man of education and intelligence" (*BC* 93) and "an interesting talker" (*BC* 94). Here Montgomery has altered the past, eliminating one of the romantic obstacles between herself and the man she desired.

The emphasis upon 'talk' is also important as this was another element missing in Montgomery's relationship with Herman Leard. Because Montgomery was constrained by her engagement to another man, she would not allow Herman to make any avowals of affection. She writes: "He must have thought me a wild, perplexing creature in very truth, so ready to meet his caress half way, yet always ruthlessly cutting short any attempt at uttered sentiment. If I never fully understood him I have the sorry satisfaction of feeling that I, too, puzzled him" (*Journals* 1.211). It seems that this prevented any kind of meeting of minds or understanding of the other's nature. Furthermore, because their time together was made up of stolen moments -- they could not be open about their relationship while living in the same house -- just being alone and enjoying physical togetherness, even in silence, seem to have been satisfying. She writes: "There seemed no need of speech -- we hardly ever talked much when alone together -- it was enough to sit there in dreamy, rapturous silence" (*Journals* 1.211). While silence was one way to ignore the obstacles which kept them apart, it also created a gulf between them.

Thus, in the novel it seems that Valancy cannot stress enough how satisfying it is to talk to Barney. She reflects that "[i]t seemed so easy to talk to Barney Snaith . . . as easy and natural as

if talking to herself" (*BC* 91). Valancy even confides to him about her fantasy life: "She told him about her Blue Castle. It was so easy to tell Barney things. One felt he understood everything -- even the things you didn't tell him" (*BC* 112). A large part of their happiness together seems to be found in intellectual communication: "They talked about everything in this world and a good many things in other worlds. They laughed over their own jokes until the Blue Castle reechoed" (*BC* 167). Yet at the same time, Valancy expresses Montgomery's own hesitancy about verbalised sentiment. On the journey to the Blue Castle after the marriage ceremony, she says "But I wanted you to talk. I don't want you to make love to me, but I want you to act like an ordinary human being" (*BC* 132). She feels a great need for real communication but shies away from romantic utterances.

Thus, Montgomery cannot move entirely beyond the lure of silence. She suggests that because the 'talk' is good, the silence is equally rewarding. Twice Valancy draws the reader's attention to the silence between herself and Barney. The first instance reveals the contented nature of their relationship: "How sweet it was to sit there and do nothing in the beautiful silence, with Barney at the other side of the table, smoking!" (*BC* 151). The second instance demonstrates that there is a certain unity to be found in communal silence: "They didn't talk much, but Valancy had a curious sense of *oneness*. She knew that she couldn't have felt that if he hadn't liked her" (*BC* 174). The ability to communicate and commune seems to be an indication of a deep and abiding attachment.

Because of the passionate nature of Montgomery's relationship with Herman Leard, "[a] strong undercurrent of sensuality" (Porter 103) characterizes the fictional relationship of Valancy and Barney, and by extension it colours the novel as a whole. The ". . . comparative openness

with which the author discusses the sexuality of the heroine, and the pleasure of physical contact" (Scanlon 91) makes the novel unique. Right from the beginning of *The Blue Castle*, Montgomery makes it clear that it is not so much a husband that Valancy wants, but a man. Valancy reflects that:

> One does not sleep well, sometimes, when one is twenty-nine on the morrow, and unmarried, in a community and connection where the unmarried are simply those who have failed to get a man.
>
> Deerwood and the Stirlings had long since relegated Valancy to hopeless old maidenhood. But Valancy herself had never quite relinquished a certain pitiful, shamed, little hope that Romance would come her way yet -- never, until this wet, horrible morning , when she wakened to the fact that she was twenty-nine and unsought by any man.
>
> Ay, *there* lay the sting. Valancy did not mind so much being an old maid. After all, she thought, being an old maid couldn't possibly be as dreadful as being married to an Uncle Wellington or an Uncle Benjamin, or even an Uncle Herbert. What hurt her was that she had never had a chance to be anything but an old maid. No man had ever desired her. (*BC* 1)

In Valancy's analysis of romance, marriage is reduced to a necessary legitimization of the physical and passionate relationship between a man and a woman. What Montgomery points to and exposes is ". . . the repressive society in which she herself had grown up, not only its hypocrisy and narrow-mindedness in general, but in particular the double standards and the 'stigmatising and controlling' of female sexuality that goes [sic] with it" (Ahmansson *Space* 151). Thus it is

significant that "[w]hen Valancy sets out to persuade Barney to marry her she is not looking for a marriage in a conventional sense. She is looking for sexual fulfillment, for a love affair, and that is what the short-term marriage that she proposes really stands for" (Ahmansson *Space* 151). Because she believes she has only a year to live, a home, children, financial security and companionship are not her concerns. What Valancy wants, by her own definition, is to meet her death as a woman and not as a child.

Valancy's need and desire for physical contact with a man are revealed in her contemplation of the sterility of her life, present and past. She remembers "[t]he boy who had tried to kiss her at a party when she was fifteen. She had not let him -- she had evaded him and run. He was the only boy who had ever tried to kiss her. Now, fourteen years later, Valancy found herself wishing she had let him" (*BC* 42). It is obvious that Montgomery is implying frustrated passions. However, as Gabriella Ahmansson points out, "Valancy is living in a society in which there is severe repression of female sexuality. Since she is unmarried, she is supposed to be totally ignorant in these matters" (*Space* 150). Montgomery is making a bold statement in presenting Valancy, however subtly, as a sensual being, because recognizing women as ". . . individuals with . . . legitimate sexual passions, with an independent, autonomous existence, meant challenging the moral and political orthodoxy. . . . It meant, in particular, questioning the permanence, even the desirability of marriage . . ." (Stubbs xv). Because marriage is the foundation of family, which is the cornerstone of society at the turn of the century, Montgomery is questioning the very essence of her world.

In a 1922 journal entry, Montgomery directly addresses the significance of sexuality and the problems associated with it. She writes: "Sex is to men and women one of the most vital

subjects in the world -- perhaps *the* most vital subject since our total existence is based on and centres around it. Yet with how few, even of women, can this vital subject be frankly and intelligently discussed. It is so overlaid with conventions, inhibitions and taboos that it is almost impossible for anyone to see it as it really is" (*Journals* 3.39). What Montgomery is pointing to here is the silence which surrounds the issue of sexuality, and this silence is made clear in the development of the novel. Valancy's frustrated sexuality is continually alluded to but never directly addressed. Uncle Benjamin, the voice of the status quo in society, says of Valancy's sudden change in behaviour: "'Of course Doss has made a terrible exhibition of herself today, but she's not responsible. Old maids are apt to fly off at a tangent like that. If she had been married when she should have been she wouldn't have got like this'" (*BC* 68). Even Valancy recognizes her frustration for what it is, as revealed in this exchange with Cousin Stickles:

> 'Won't you try to remember you're a lady?' she pleaded.
>
> 'Oh, if there were only any hope of being able to forget it!' said Valancy wearily. (*BC* 50)

Valancy's passions are restrained by the need to remember her position in society as a gendered being and the recognition of what would become of her if she forgot it, no matter how much she wishes she might.

There are definite repercussions associated with this sexual repression; ". . . Valancy's mental as well as her physical health is threatened by her celibacy" (Ahmansson *Space* 149). Her need for a Blue Castle to sustain her in life is an obvious allusion to its effect upon her mental state, and her heart problems are its physical manifestation. Montgomery herself is aware of the effects of repression; she suffered from migraine headaches which she attributed to the stress of

her affair with Herman. In 1919 she writes in her journal: "These headaches of mine have been periodic occurrences for the past twenty-three years. Up to the time I was twenty-one I never had a headache, save when I was catching some disease such as measles or scarlet fever. But after that winter in Bedeque I began to have them regularly. Their origin is nervous and was probably due to the rack of suppressed passion and suffering on which I was stretched that winter" (*Journals* 2.360). Montgomery attributes this suppression to the conflict between passion and conscience. She writes:

> I have a very uncomfortable blend in my make-up -- the passionate Montgomery blood and the Puritan Macneill conscience. Neither is strong enough wholly to control the other. The Puritan conscience can't prevent the hot blood from having its way -- in part at least -- but it *can* poison all the pleasure and it does. Passion says, 'Go on. Take what crumbs of happiness fall in your way.' Conscience says, 'Do so if you will. Feed your soul on those blood-red husks; but I'll scourge you well for it afterwards. (*Journals* 1.213)

Thus Montgomery recognizes that passion for a woman is a dangerous temptation, for as surely as her conscience will scourge her, so will society.

The Blue Castle clearly demonstrates the ways in which this society attempts to regulate women's passions. Valancy's rosebush may be seen as a metaphor for this repression. The narrator tells us that:

> Valancy did everything she could think of and took the advice of everybody in the clan, but still the rosebush would not bloom. It throve and grew luxuriantly, with great leafy branches untouched by rust or spider; but not even a bud had ever

> appeared on it. Valancy, looking at it two days after her birthday, was filled with a sudden, overwhelming hatred for it. The thing wouldn't bloom: very well, then, she would cut it down. (*BC* 31)

Similarly, having accepted her clan's right to regulate every detail of her behaviour, Valancy grew to be a woman in the physical sense, but she was not allowed to mature emotionally or socially. She has been denied her sexual blooming. However, when Valancy turns her back on convention, she thrives, just as the rosebush does when she cuts it back:

> 'Look at my rosebush! Why, it's blooming!'
>
> It was. Covered with blossoms. Great, crimson, velvety blossoms. Fragrant. Glowing. Wonderful.
>
> 'My cutting it to pieces must have done it good,' said Valancy, laughing. (*BC* 139)

Thus Valancy's violent severing of the ties which bound her to 'acceptable' behaviour has done her good, just as it has for the rosebush, and it has enabled her to bloom as a complete individual, sexuality included.

Valancy is most certainly transformed into a passionate, sensual being. From the beginning of her transformation, her developing sensuality is an integral component of her growth as a woman. When Valancy commences her rebellion at the family reunion, she recognizes "a subtle fascination" for the subject of Barney Snaith, for at the mention of him, "[s]he could feel her pulses beating to her finger-tips" (*BC* 61). Already she is experiencing an increased physical awareness. Upon her move away from the repressive home of her youth into the house of the freely passionate Roaring Abel, Valancy learns to appreciate masculine attention. She reflects that

". . . Abel's superannuated gallantry did not worry Valancy. Besides, this was the first compliment she had ever received in her life and she found herself liking it. She sometimes suspected she had nice ankles, but nobody had ever mentioned it before. In the Stirling clan ankles were among the unmentionables" (*BC* 85). Valancy is coming to recognize herself as a physically attractive woman. Her passions are awakened further as she spends time with and comes to know Barney. Valancy discovers that "[s]he liked his nice voice which sounded as if it might become caressing or wooing with very little provocation. She was at times almost afraid to let herself think these thoughts. They were so vivid that she felt as if the others *must* know what she was thinking" (*BC* 94-95). She begins to feel an unaccustomed sexual attraction, and finds her passions so overwhelming that she is not sure she can contain them behind the acceptable facade of a lady.

Furthermore, Valancy's account of her marriage to Barney reveals that, for her, the most rewarding aspect of marriage is physical contact. She is quite frank about this, even from the beginning. After Barney accepts her offer of marriage, she says: "It is so nice of you not to refuse me -- or offer to be a brother!'" (*BC* 129). She is seeking attention, not protection. Consequently, when her family reminds her of all she could have owned if she had married her recent suitor, a man who really wants a mother for his children, Valancy reveals that she has little interest in the material rewards of marriage:

> 'Edward Beck is worth twenty thousand dollars and has the finest house between here and Port Lawrence,' said Uncle Benjamin.
>
> 'That sounds very fine,' said Valancy scornfully, 'but it isn't worth *that*' -- she snapped her fingers -- 'compared to feeling Barney's arms around me and his cheek against mine.' (*BC* 144)

Her marriage has awakened her passions and she revels in them. She has found in marriage to Barney exactly what she was looking for: the proximity of another human body. Montgomery writes:

> Valancy was quite warm at nights. She used to wake up and revel silently in the cosiness of those winter nights on that little island in the frozen lake. The nights of other winters had been so cold and long. Valancy hated to wake up in them and think about the bleakness and emptiness of the day that had passed and the bleakness and emptiness of the day that would come. Now she almost counted that night lost on which she didn't wake up and lie awake for half an hour just being happy, while Barney's regular breathing went on beside her. . . . (*BC* 166)

It is this nearness that she misses when she decides she must leave Barney. Once alone, "[s]he ached for him. She wanted his arms around her -- his face against hers -- his whispers in her ear. She recalled all his friendly looks and quips and jests -- his little compliments -- his caresses. She counted them all over as a woman might count her jewels -- not one did she miss from the first day they had met" (*BC* 205). She does not mourn for the domestic pleasures of marriage, as social convention would presume, but rather she laments the loss of physical rewards.

Montgomery's description of Valancy's physical response to Barney mirrors her own response to Herman Leard, as recorded in her journal. From their first physical contact, Montgomery is lost in its sensual pleasure. She writes:

> Suddenly Herman leaned over, passed his arm about me and, with a subtly caressing movement, drew my head down on his shoulder.
>
> I was about to straighten up indignantly and say something rather tart but

> before I could do so there came over me like a *spell* the mysterious, irresistible *influence* which Herman Leard exercised over me from that date -- an attraction I could neither escape nor overcome and against which all the resolution and will power in the world didn't weigh a feather's weight. It was indescribable and overwhelming. (*Journals* 1.209)

Passionate contact with him reveals a response in her that she formerly did not know existed: "I cannot tell what possessed me -- I seemed swayed by a power utterly beyond my control -- I turned my head -- our lips met in one long passionate pressure -- a kiss of fire and rapture such as I had never in all my life experienced or imagined. *Ed's* kisses at the best left me cold as ice -- *Herman's* sent flame through every vein and fibre of my being" (*Journals* 1.209).

For Montgomery, this is extremely troubling as she is not free to give in to her awakening passion. Unlike Valancy, Montgomery is not married to -- and cannot be married to -- the man who awakens her to sexual pleasure. Even while she is revelling in these new emotions and sensations, her conscience is castigating her for her weakness. She writes: "I knew if I let matters drift on as they were drifting one of two things must inevitably happen. My health and it might be my very reason would give way -- or I would fall over the brink of the precipice upon which I stood into an abyss of ruin. And I made a desperate vow to break the chain that bound me at any cost" (*Journals* 1.214). Despite her resolve, the force of her passion is formidable and takes her to the brink of capitulation. She clearly communicates the sensuality of the moment:

> I gave up trying to send him away then. I sat there in silence -- oh God, such a silence. It was eloquent with a thousand tongues. All the women of my race who have loved in the past spoke in me. I felt Herman's burning breath on my face, his

> burning kisses on my lips. And then I heard him making the same request he had made before, veiled, half inaudible, but unmistakable. For a moment that seemed like a year my whole life reeled in the balance. The most horrible temptation swept over me -- I remember to this minute its awful power -- to *yield* -- to let him stay where he was -- to be his body and soul if [for] that one night at least! (*Journals* 1.217)

Nevertheless, she refuses to give in and must turn her back on passion in favour of reason, duty, and the practical concerns of choosing a suitable mate. Unlike the imaginatively rewritten affair of Valancy and Barney, Montgomery never does discover the result of unleashing her passions.

The novel's emphasis upon passion and sexuality also raises questions about the nature of love and marriage and their role in a woman's life. This is an issue toward which Montgomery continually returns in both her personal and public writings. Because the relationship of Valancy and Barney in *The Blue Castle* seems to be so closely related to Montgomery's romance with Herman Leard, the reader discovers in the novel a blending of the ways in which the author experienced love herself, and an imaginative presentation of what she hopes love could be and fears it might be.

In her own life, Montgomery discovered sadly that love and the promise of marriage are not inextricably linked. She had a vision of her ideal mate, a man who was "... handsome, of course -- did ever girl dream of a plain lover? -- educated, [her] equal in birth and social position and -- most important of all -- in intellect" (*Journals* 1.208). However, this is an intellectual approach to emotion. She soon discovers that love may be found where one least expects -- or even desires -- it. Passion, she learns, has little connection with reason:

> ... I *loved* Herman Leard with a wild, passionate, unreasoning love that dominated my entire being and possessed me like a flame -- a love I could neither quell nor control -- a love that in its intensity seemed little short of absolute madness. Madness! Yes! Even if I had been free Herman Leard was impossible, viewed as a husband. It would be the rankest folly to dream of marrying such a man. If I were mad enough to do so -- well, I would be deliriously happy for a year or so -- and wretched, discontented and unhappy all the rest of my life. I saw this plainly enough -- passion, while it mastered my heart, left my brain unclouded. I never for a moment deceived myself into thinking or hoping that any good could come out of this love of mine. (*Journals* 1.210)

Montgomery is uncomfortable with the overpowering nature of passionate love. She seems to feel that to love intensely is to lose some aspect of the self. In 1917 she writes in her journal: "My infatuation for Herman Leard was undoubtedly, the *deepest strongest* feeling I have ever experienced. It lacked only mental subjugation to be all-conquering. But that it *did* lack -- and so I escaped. But I left something behind in that fiery furnace of temptation -- and I brought something out. Passion gives and takes away" (*Journals* 2.205). Thus intense emotion is a kind of bondage from which she must free herself.

Three years later she expands upon this in her theory of the multifaceted nature of real love:

> I have loved different men in vastly different ways; but I have never loved any man with the whole force of my nature -- with passion and friendship and worship. They have all been present repeatedly but never altogether in any of my loves.

> Perhaps it is as well, for such a love, in spite of its rapture and wonder and happiness, would make a woman an absolute slave, and if the man so loved -- the *Master* -- were not something very little lower than the angels I think the result, in one way or another, would be disastrous for the woman.
>
> And yet -- such a love might be worth disaster. One would always have its memory at least. My own love for Herman Leard, though so incomplete, is a memory beside which all the rest of life seems gray and dowdy. . . . (*Journals* 2.370)

Thus a love with all three of these components would be a complete and 'ideal' love; however, it seems that Montgomery cannot reconcile herself to its absolute and dominating nature despite its attractions. She seems quite convinced that this kind of love, with 'the whole force of one's nature' can only result in a woman's total subjugation to a man.

By the end of the novel, Valancy's love for Barney, while it begins with physical desire, seems to be a love of 'passion, friendship, and worship.' Valancy's love is revealed to her in a 'lightning flash.' She reflects:

> She knew quite well now that she loved Barney. Yesterday she had been all her own. Now she was this man's. Yet he had done nothing -- said nothing. He had not even looked at her as a woman. But that didn't matter. Nor did it matter what he was or what he had done. She loved him without any reservations. Everything in her went out wholly to him. She had no wish to stifle or disown her love. She seemed to be his so absolutely that thought apart from him -- thought in which he did not predominate -- was an impossibility. (*BC* 111)

The essence of her being is transformed by her love: "Valancy felt as if she had exchanged her shop-worn soul for a fresh one, fire-new from the workshop of the gods" (*BC* 112). She even verbalizes the fact that she is Barney's with all three elements of her being. Valancy says that she is completely his; her love is a "possession of body, soul, and mind" (*BC* 112). Perhaps this accounts for the reader's feeling of ambivalence at the novel's conclusion. Montgomery's own reservations about the wisdom this kind of love make themselves subtly known. She worried for her own fate in the face of a love which encompassed only two of the elements, and the reader cannot help wondering about the fate of Valancy's individuality in the face of this consuming love.

Part of what contributes to this sense of discomfort is Valancy's worship of the author John Foster, who is revealed to be none other than her own husband, simple Barney Snaith. The transformation from no-account bad-boy lover to idol is distinctly disturbing, particularly in the implication that he can wield incredible power over Valancy should he so choose. Two of Valancy's assertions make his authority over her alarmingly clear. The first statement places him in the role of author of her very life script. She says that she ". . . felt at times as if she were living in a book by John Foster" (*BC* 161). The second statement goes even further and elevates him to the position of god and saviour: "'John Foster's books were all that saved my soul alive the past five years . . .'" (*BC* 163). Thus, he becomes both the creator and sustainer of life for Valancy; without him she would cease to exist. Her love for Barney has resulted in her total subjugation.

Not only is love a thing which leads to subjugation, it is also inextricably linked with the promise of death. In part, this is a result of Montgomery's conviction that a love of passion, friendship and worship is potentially disastrous for a woman. In addition, if the novel is an imaginative rewriting of her love for Herman, death has to be an integral part of the text because

his death killed passionate love for her. She writes in her journal:

> I have something else to write here yet before I conclude -- no less than the 'finish' to the most tragic chapter of my life. It is ended forever and the page is turned.
>
> Herman Leard is -- *dead*! (*Journals* 1.240)

However, if Montgomery is indulging herself in what could have been, rather than in what was, she must find another way to deal with the spectre of death. It seems that its shadow cannot be eliminated as it is an essential part of the affair, but death in the novel is associated with the woman, not the man, thus enabling the resolution of events to be different.

From the first pages of the novel, Valancy is aware of the shadow of death hanging over her. She recognizes the emptiness of her life and equates it with a kind of spiritual demise:

> The moment when a woman realises that she has nothing to live for -- neither love, duty, purpose nor hope -- holds for her the bitterness of death.
>
> 'And I just have to go on living because I can't stop.' (*BC* 5)

But Valancy's visit to the doctor to inquire about her heart pains reveals that she has another option; she does not have to go on living. She can anticipate her death. This knowledge is liberating for her. Knowing that her death is foreordained, she finds the strength to let herself go: "She made a discovery that surprised her; she, who had been afraid of almost everything in life, was not afraid of death. It did not seem in the least terrible to her. And she need not now be afraid of anything else. Why had she been afraid of things? Because of life. . . . Valancy felt a curious freedom" (*BC* 37).

In fact, it is the liberation from a long life which gives rise to her conviction to find fulfillment: "But though she was not afraid of death she was not indifferent to it. She found that

she *resented* it; it was not fair that she should have to die when she had never lived. Rebellion flamed up in her soul as the dark hours passed by -- not because she had no future but because she had no past" (*BC* 39). She determines to take from life, rather than let life take from her: "'I wish,' she said whimsically, 'that I may have *one* little dust-pile before I die'" (*BC* 71). It is this need to build her own castle in the sand which leads her to leave her home and all of the repression associated with it. Figuratively speaking, her affair with Barney is her dust-pile.

However, things do not work out as she has planned them. The 'promise' of only one year to live turns out to be metaphorical rather than physical. The first hint of this appears after Valancy has spent a night alone in the Blue Castle fearing that Barney has been lost in a snow storm. She says of his symbolic return from the dead: "'When -- I saw you -- come round the point -- there -- something happened to me. I don't know what. It was as if I had died and come back to life. I can't describe it any other way'" (*BC* 169). Valancy, then, has died just as Dr. Trent assured her she would; however, she has not been released from life, and she has to find a way to go on living. This is made clear to Valancy after Barney saves her from an on-rushing train. The stress of the event should have stopped her heart, yet it continues to beat. In fact, "[s]he was not one iota the worse for it" (*BC* 177). Greatly concerned, she takes the first opportunity to see the doctor, at which time it is revealed that she received a letter meant for another Miss Sterling. He assures her that her heart troubles have been cured. Valancy's reaction to the news is telling. She is not overjoyed: "Dr. Trent thought she was odd. Anybody would have thought, from her hopeless eyes and woebegone face, that he had given her a sentence of death instead of life" (*BC* 183). Perhaps in Valancy's eyes that is exactly what he has done. After all, "[s]he had made a covenant with death and death had cheated her. Now life stood mocking

her" (*BC* 185).

Valancy had never intended to spend more than a year with Barney. Right from the beginning she believed that it would be a brief relationship:

'Marriage is such a serious thing,' sighed Cousin Georgiana.

'When it's going to last long,' agreed Valancy. (*BC* 148)

Her marriage was really an affair, comprised of stolen moments with an entirely unsuitable man. Now the graveness of her error has been revealed to her: "She had had one draught from a divine cup and now it was dashed from her lips. With no kind, friendly death to rescue her. She must go on living, longing for it. Everything was spoiled, smirched, defaced. Even that year in the Blue Castle. Even her unashamed love for Barney. It had been beautiful because death waited. Now it was only sordid because death was gone" (*BC* 185). The subjugation of her entire self to love, and the object of that love, was an acceptable thing because both its beginning and its end were clear to her. Now, Valancy has been sentenced to spend the rest of her years, however many they may be, with a man to whom she has surrendered body, soul, and mind. She is no longer her own person and never will be again, because as Elizabeth Waterston points out, "... the traditional ceremonies of courtship and the forms of the wedding ceremony, have come to reinforce the expectation of submissive womanhood" (*Kindling Spirit* 63). The knowledge that Valancy will spend the rest of her long life in a state of subjugation is disturbing. Because Valancy is no longer liberated, the reader is left with a sense that only Valancy's death will constitute a happy ending for the novel.

Montgomery, in communicating her own reservations, makes it quite clear that this is how she wants the reader to feel. The text of the conclusion sounds happy, but the subtext does not.

The spark seems to have gone out of Valancy's character once the conventions of romance are fulfilled. After all, "[p]assivity *is* at the heart of the romance experience in the sense that the final goal of each narrative is the creation of that perfect union where the ideal male, who is masculine and strong yet nurturant too, finally recognizes the intrinsic worth of the heroine. Thereafter, she is required to do nothing more than *exist* as the center of this paragon's attention" (Radway 97). It is safe to say that Valancy has been reduced to a romantic object. Her period of self-determination is over.

Furthermore, as in *Kilmeny of the Orchard*, the heroine, because of her romantic ties, finds herself forced into an unfamiliar and uncomfortable world. Valancy clearly expresses her concern: "'But -- I'm not fit for your life. . . . I'm not -- clever -- or well-educated -- or --'" (*BC* 215). Barney attempts to allay her fears, "'My life is in Mistawis -- and all the wild places of the world. I'm not going to ask you to live the life of a society woman. Of course, we must spend a bit of the time with Dad . . .'" (*BC* 215), but this is a qualified statement. First of all, he refers to 'his' life, not 'theirs,' which implies that Valancy must be the one to make all of the adjustments. The phrasing 'of course' implies that while he will not 'ask' her to become a society woman, she still may be required to become one. Even in his promise to take her travelling, Barney clearly places Valancy in a subordinate position, adopting the role of mentor: "'You know nothing of the beauty of the world. . . . I want to show you it all -- see it again through your eyes" (*BC* 216). The tone of this statement implies that the pleasure will be all his. Thus Valancy's setting will have changed, as will her companions in life, but she will still be treated as a child, as she was by her clan.

Montgomery writes enough ambiguity into the novel's final statement to place doubts or

even questions in the mind of her reader. Clearly this new beginning Valancy faces fills her with ambivalence: "Valancy smiled through her tears. She was so happy that her happiness terrified her. But, despite the delights before her . . . she knew perfectly well that no spot or palace or home in the world could ever possess the sorcery of her Blue Castle" (*BC* 218). While she does her duty and follows her husband, her heart seems to be tied to the Blue Castle. However, the question here must be to which Blue Castle Montgomery refers: the imaginary castle in Spain or the Muskoka cabin. Can Valancy find happiness in reality, or must she again retreat to the realm of fantasy to sustain her? It would seem that in her imaginative rewriting of the past, Montgomery has discovered sexual fulfillment but has forfeited independence, and as a result she has not risen above the need for the solace found in 'dream lives.'

Chapter Three
"As Brave and Heroic and Unselfish as I Can Possibly Be": The Conflict Between Heroism and Romance in *Rilla of Ingleside*

In 1920, Montgomery completed the writing of *Rilla of Ingleside*, a work which she judged as "fairly good" (*Journals* 2.390). She identifies the novel as "the first one I have written with a purpose" (*Journals* 3.17). This purpose is revealed in her response to a pacifist fan who criticizes the work as "a 'beastly book' because it 'glorifies war';" she states: "I wrote *Rilla* not to 'glorify war' but to glorify the courage and patriotism and self-sacrifice it evoked" (*Journals* 3.388).

Certainly, on one level, *Rilla of Ingleside* is a creative adaptation of Montgomery's own experience of the war years, which affected her deeply. In response to the declaration of war, Montgomery writes, "Civilization stands aghast at the horror that is coming upon it" (*Journals* 2.150). For her, this horror becomes an ever-present shade, and her distress is compounded by the fact that no one else seems able to comprehend her anguish. In 1915 she writes: "Ewan refuses to talk about it. He claims that it unsettles him and he cannot do his work properly. No doubt this is so; but it is rather hard on me, for I have no one else with whom to discuss it. There is absolutely *no* one around here who seems to *realize* the war. I believe that it is well they do not. If all felt as I do over it the work of the country would certainly suffer. But I feel as if I were stranded on a coast where nobody talked my language" (*Journals* 2.159). All of this intense emotion is grist for the mill for Montgomery; the passion expressed in her journals is mirrored in the pages of the novel. However, in *Rilla of Ingleside*, "[t]he virtually unrelieved anguish of the real journals is leavened in fiction with humour, irony, and drama" (Epperly 114). The intensity is

not lessened, but the touch is lighter.

Critics have responded to Montgomery's representation of war in a variety of ways. Dudley Owen Edwards maintains that in *Rilla of Ingleside*, "Montgomery is variously celebrating intellectual ambition, old tradition, democratic and hierarchical social patterns, the value of convention and the rebellions it induces . . ." (127), and that "*Rilla*'s own great achievement is to assert the hunger for life perpetually struggling to assert itself in the omnipresence of death" (131). Mary Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston contend that "Montgomery's potent mixture of realism (in setting, event, and characterization) and sentimentality produces a book unique among war novels since it presents war as half the world experiences it -- from the woman's point of view" (70). Similarly, Elizabeth Epperly sees the novel as ". . . a wonderful study of psychology -- of what the women left behind use to support themselves, what fictions they create to make the days and months and years bearable" (114). Conversely, Theodore Scheckels declares that "[i]f Montgomery had stopped her novel with Rilla's coming of age, she would have written a noteworthy feminist novel -- noteworthy in its theme and in its structure. However, she yielded again to the formal expectations or demands of her readers" (530), and by retreating from ". . . radical content and form; again, she conformed" (530).

I would argue that the essential structure of the novel is feminist. Montgomery wrote the novel to glorify courage and self-sacrifice -- the courage and sacrifice of women. It is apparent that, "[u]nder the guise of writing about the plight of a nation and its men, Montgomery wrote in *Rilla of Ingleside* a story of women's empowerment. Women in this book, as in Montgomery's account of war in her *Journals*, moved outside the domestic sphere and became involved in a global event" (Yeast *Articulating* 134). In *Rilla of Ingleside*, the reader witnesses Rilla's struggle

to be a hero while social conventions try to mould her as a heroine. From the beginning, Rilla rebels against the domestic conventions which construct women. In this novel of development, Rilla strives to find an identity which can rise above these structures and restrictions to embrace equality, honour and individuality, virtues which mirror what the young men are fighting for. What Scheckels perceives as yielding and conforming in the novel is Montgomery's subtle representation of how the image of idealized femininity eventually leads to the young woman's entrapment in social convention.

Evidence of this rebellion against convention is found in the very structure of the novel. Through the use of Rilla's diary entries, Montgomery ". . . allows the socially constrained young 'lady' more freedom to express thoughts and emotions . . ." (Yeast *Articulating* 125). With this extensive use of first person narration, Rilla is allowed to speak for herself. Because the diary is a private document, Rilla can voice her desires free from the conventions of self-restraint which characterize public discourse.

Joanne Frye explains how the use of the personal voice is a sign of a subversive text. She writes:

> The literary dangers to patriarchal wholeness . . . originate in the woman's voice. Once the female 'I' has spoken, the subversion is begun. . . . By virtue of speaking as a woman, any female narrator-protagonist evokes some awareness of the disjunction between internal and external definitions and some recognition of her agency in self-narration. To speak directly in a personal voice is to deny the exclusive right of male author-ity [sic] implicit in a public voice and to escape the expression of dominant ideologies upon which an omniscient narrator depends.

(J. Frye 50-51)

This technique is part of the assertion of identity: "[t]he speaking 'I' claims her identity in process; in becoming the interpreter of her own experience, she also claims both her femaleness and her autonomous self-definition. Her narrating voice becomes her capacity for human wholeness in complexity and change" (J. Frye 76). As Rilla herself reveals, this is the function of her diary. She writes: "I like to keep it up regularly, for father says a diary of the years of the war should be a very interesting thing to hand down to one's children. The trouble is, I like to write a few personal things in this blessed old book that might not be exactly what I'd want my children to read!'" (*RI* 177). While the activity of journal-keeping is patriarchally approved, Rilla modifies it to suit her own purposes of self-expression and self-determination.

This use of the female 'I' is a significant step, for as Annis Pratt points out, "[w]e are the heirs . . . of centuries in which women, like words, have been considered symbolic objects of use in a masculine structure, linguistic tokens rather than wielders of words in our own right. . . . [T]o use our drive for authenticity in order to shape feminine archetypes into fiction, to bring elements of our inner world into consciousness and give them shape in the social form of the novel, is an act of defiance . . ." (11).

The activity of shaping the feminine into fiction often takes place in the novel of development, where the protagonist is searching for both meaning and identity. However, for women this is often a problematic genre because "[t]he novel of development portrays a world in which the young woman hero is destined for disappointment. The vitality and hopefulness characterizing the adolescent hero's attitude toward her future here meet and conflict with the expectations and dictates of the surrounding society" (Pratt 29). This is further complicated by

the fact that in this genre, ". . . social realism is apt to become mixed with elements of romance" (Pratt 13), and romance, for the female protagonist, is inextricably linked with subordination. Even if the story purports to be one of education and growth, ". . . no matter how much force the heroine is granted at the beginning of her story, ideology, as it governed life and as it governed literary form, required that she should marry, and marriage meant relinquishment of power as surely as it meant the purchase of wedding clothes" (Newton 8).

Consequently, while the protagonist of the novel of development is supposed to be a hero, if the novel is about a young woman, the literary conventions try to construct her as a heroine, limiting the possible scope of her development. In a war-time novel, women are placed definitively on the homefront, resulting in a largely domestic setting. In this context, the young woman's importance revolves around her identity as the embodiment of an ideal image of femininity, at the heart of which " . . is the notion that women exist to meet the needs of others: to contribute to the comfort of their families, to elevate the sensibilities of the 'opposite sex,' and to socialize children properly. Thus self-abnegation and submission are moral ideals particularly appropriate for women" (Hunt 2). This is what the young female protagonist must fight against if she is to become, and remain, a hero.

As the story opens, Rilla is depicted as a frivolous young girl, pretty and happy, but lacking substance. Even her mother characterizes her as shallow: "'The truth is, Rilla is the only one of my flock who isn't ambitious. . . . She has no serious ideals at all -- her sole aspiration seems to be to have a good time'" (*RI* 7). Rilla is also depicted as delicate, implying that she needs to be protected: "'Her father thinks she is not quite strong enough [to go to Queen's] -- she has rather outgrown her strength -- she's really absurdly tall for a girl not yet fifteen'" (*RI* 7).

Conversely, Rilla is full of an infectious love of life: "There was something in her movements that made you think she never walked but always danced. She had been much petted and was a wee bit spoiled, but still the general opinion was that Rilla Blythe was a very sweet girl, even if she were not so clever as Nan and Di" (*RI* 12). She wants to wring every drop of joy out of her young life: "'Taste life! I want to *eat* it. . . . I heard someone say once that the years from fifteen to nineteen are the best years in a girl's life. I'm going to make them perfectly splendid -- just fill them with fun'" (*RI* 15). She is quite frank about having no interest in other pursuits:

> 'There's bound to be a dunce in every family. I'm quite willing to be a dunce if I can be a pretty, popular, delightful one. I have no talent at all, and you can't imagine how comfortable it is. Nobody expects me to do anything. And I can't be a housewifely, cookly creature, either. I hate sewing and dusting, and when Susan couldn't teach me to make biscuits nobody could. Father says I toil not neither do I spin. Therefore, I must be a lily of the field.' (*RI* 16)

Here Montgomery has skilfully created conflicting images which reveal the contrast between structured identity and essential nature.

This characterization sets the scene for Rilla's coming of age. With the advent of war, Rilla is transformed from social butterfly to purposeful young woman. In Rilla's recognition of her own development, the reader sees her potential as a hero. Her soul development begins with self-reflection: "Was she -- could she be -- the same Rilla Blythe who had danced at Four Winds Light six days ago -- only six days ago? It seemed to Rilla that she had lived as much in those six days as in all her previous life . . ." (*RI* 40). With the recognition of her ability to change comes a determination to participate actively in the war effort. She asserts: "'Mother, I want to do

something. I'm only a girl -- I can't do anything to win the war -- but I must do something to help at home'" (*RI* 52). Her motivation is the desire to be a hero: "'I have been thinking it all over and I have decided that I must be as *brave* and *heroic* and *unselfish* as I can possibly be'" (*RI* 52-53). For a girl who previously vowed she had no concerns beyond dances and dresses and beaus, this represents considerable progress.

Rilla's heroism takes the form of participation in those activities which she previously disliked. While she claims she is not 'a housewifely, cookly creature,' this is definitely an element of her transformation: "So here was Rilla hemming sheets and organizing a Junior Red Cross in her thoughts as she hemmed; moreover, she was enjoying it -- the organizing that is, not the hemming. It was interesting and Rilla discovered a certain aptitude in herself for it that surprised her" (*RI* 53). This rôle seems to satisfy her initially, but before long, Rilla realizes that it is not enough: ". . . Rilla wished desperately that she could do something besides waiting and serving at home, as day after day the Glen boys she had known went away. If she were only a boy, speeding in khaki by Carl's side to the western front! She had wished that in a burst of romance when Jem had gone, without, perhaps, really meaning it. She meant it now. There were moments when waiting at home, in safety and comfort, seemed an unendurable thing" (*RI* 144). The traditional, womanly rôle fails to satisfy her need to serve the cause. However, while she cannot enter into the masculine rôle of soldier, there are other non-traditional things which she can do in the name of filling a need:

> 'By the way, father,' said Rilla, 'I'm going to take Jack Flagg's place in his father's store for a month. I promised him today that I would, if you didn't object. Then he can help the farmers get the harvest in. I don't think I'd be much use in a

> harvest field myself -- though lots of the girls are -- but I can set Jack free while I do his work. . . . It's just one way of doing my bit.' (*RI* 216)

Necessity is a convenient excuse to justify her participation in areas of experience previously denied her. Significantly, Rilla is careful to point out that it is individual nature and not gender which motivates her choice.

The work with the Junior Red Cross is one of the cornerstones of her development. Rilla makes a conscious attempt to valorize her activities: "What would they think of her if she shirked her little duty here -- the humble duty of carrying the programme through for her Red Cross? . . . what was it mother had said when Jem went -- 'when our women fail in courage, shall our men be fearless still?'" (*RI* 116). Nevertheless, Rilla does recognize that other ways of serving would be more attractive: "Di and Nan are home for a couple of weeks. Then they go back to Red Cross work in the training camp at Kingsport. I envy them. Father says I'm doing just as good work her, with Jims and my Junior Reds. But it lacks the *romance* theirs must have" (*RI* 170).

What she terms '*romance*' seems to have more in common with heroism. One of her efforts which resounds with romance, and by extension heroism, is her participation in rallying the young men to enlist. Her beauty and youth are sufficient encouragement for many: ". . . she was so earnest and appealing and shining-eyed! More than one recruit had joined up because Rilla's eyes seemed to look right at *him* when she passionately demanded how could men die better than fighting for the ashes of their fathers and the temples of their gods, or assured her audience with thrilling intensity that one crowded hour of glorious life was worth an age without a name" (*RI* 93). Thus, while Rilla cannot fight herself, she can skilfully manipulate her role as idealized woman to ensure that Canada's young men fill the ranks.

Before the war, Rilla looked forward to attracting beaus and her effect upon the men would have delighted her. Now, however, affairs of the heart do not hold the same fascination. She reflects:

> '[Fred Arnold] has been coming here very often lately and . . . I like him so much it makes me uncomfortable, because I am afraid he is thinking that perhaps I could care something for him. I can't tell him about Ken -- because, after all, what is there to tell? And yet I don't like to behave coldly and distantly when he will be going away so soon. It is very perplexing. I remember I used to think it would be such fun to have *dozens* of beaus -- and now I'm worried to death because two are too many.' (*RI* 149)

If she was a heroine in the conventional sense, Rilla would see this situation as a acknowledgement of her worth as a woman; now, the attention of men is a hindrance to her activities as a hero. Rilla is rebelling against the social constructions which assert that her proper goal is marriage to an appropriate young man.

Rilla's argument with her friend Irene is an excellent example of her growth both as a woman and a hero. It is representative of how she has abandoned petty concerns to focus upon the more important issue of honourable conduct. Irene's insensitivity and lack of honour are at the root of their argument: "'. . . I do not want to be friends with a girl who could repeat such a falsehood about Walter'" (*RI* 88). Rilla recognizes that she cannot confide in anyone about the reason for the dispute because it would not be honourable: "Irene had been as much in the wrong as she had been; and she had told such mean, distorted versions of their quarrel everywhere, posing as a puzzled, injured martyr. Rilla could never bring herself to tell *her* side of it. The fact

that a slur at Walter was mixed up in it tied her tongue" (*RI* 108). However, when the success of a Junior Reds' relief concert depends upon Irene's participation, Rilla puts her own feelings aside and rises to the task: "'If I went and apologized meekly to Irene she would sing, I am sure,' sighed Rilla. 'She really loves to sing in public. But I know she'll be nasty about it -- I feel I'd rather do *anything* than go. I suppose I *should* go -- if Jem and Jerry can face the Huns surely I can face Irene Howard, and swallow my pride to ask a favour of her for the good of the Belgians'" (*RI* 108). Thus, the recognition of duty and a higher cause is at the root of her decision. She constructs her actions as heroic by measuring them against those of the young men.

One of the most incredible efforts Rilla makes in her quest to be a hero is the adoption of her war-baby. This is a remarkable feat for Rilla, as she is not by nature a maternal girl. She writes in her diary: "'I don't like babies one bit -- though when I say so people look at me as if I had said something *perfectly shocking*. Well, I don't, and I've got to be honest about it. I don't mind *looking* at a nice clean baby if somebody else holds it -- but I wouldn't *touch* it for *anything* and I don't feel a single real spark of interest in it. . . . Mother and Nan and Di all adore babies and seem to think I'm unnatural because I don't'" (*RI* 45). Here Rilla has identified both the constructed feminine response to children and her own deviation from the construction. Thus, when she finds the orphaned child, it is pity, not affinity, which motivates her actions: "She had no intention of touching the baby -- *she* had no 'knack with kids' either. She saw an ugly midget with a red, distorted face, rolled up in a piece of dingy old flannel. She had never seen an uglier baby. Yet a feeling of pity for the desolate orphaned mite took sudden possession of her" (*RI* 62). Rilla shoulders the responsibility out of stubborn determination, not out of love. She feels no maternal instinct, but recognizes a duty. Thus, she rejects the motivation of the conventional heroine and

associates herself with the conventional virtues of a hero.

As with her other endeavours, Rilla stubbornly determines that she will succeed: "Was it really she, Rilla Blythe, who had got into this absurd predicament? . . . But she was not going to back down now -- not she. She would look after this detestable little animal if it killed her. She would get a book on baby hygiene and be beholden to nobody" (*RI* 67). Not only will she achieve her goals, she will succeed alone, without assistance. While Rilla does not feel any initial affinity for the child, she does a good job with his care: "She bathed and fed and dressed it as skilfully as if she had been doing it all her life. She liked neither her job nor the baby any the better; she still handled it as gingerly as if it were some kind of a small lizard, and a breakable lizard at that; but she did her work thoroughly and there was not a cleaner, better-cared-for infant in Glen St. Mary" (*RI* 68). Rilla may not exhibit any maternal inclinations, but her competence cannot be questioned.

However, Rilla is quite conscious of the fact that she does not feel as she is supposed to, at least according to the models available to her: "'I wish I could *like* the baby a little bit. It would make things easier. But I don't. I've heard people say that when you took care of a baby you got fond of it -- but you don't -- *I* don't, anyway. And it's a *nuisance* -- it interferes with everything. It just ties you down . . .'" (*RI* 69). It is obvious that Rilla longs to rebel against the restrictions imposed upon her by 'motherhood.' But as with any other achievement, Rilla is determined to be proud of her effort. She says to the baby:

> '. . . I don't like you a bit better than I ever did. But I hope your poor little mother *knows* that you're tucked in a soft basket with a bottle of milk . . . instead of perishing by inches with old Meg Conover. . . . No, I don't like you and I never

> will but for all that I'm going to make a decent, upstanding infant of you. You are going to get as fat as a self-respecting child should be, for one thing. I am *not* going to have people saying 'what a puny little thing that baby of Rilla Blythe's is,' as old Mrs. Drew said at the senior Red Cross yesterday. If I can't love you I mean to be proud of you.' (*RI* 74-75)

Again, while on one level Rilla conforms to social expectations, she consciously emphasizes the importance of tenacity and honour, which she perceives as two very heroic qualities.

Significantly, Rilla does not wish to claim the child as her own. When she must name the child, Rilla shies away from the task: "'I'm waiting to hear from Jim Anderson,' said Rilla. 'He may want to name his own child.'" (*RI* 77). It is obvious that the act of naming implies possession for Rilla, and she is not comfortable with this. Yet when she receives no word from Mr. Anderson and must accept the duty herself, Rilla chooses a name which places responsibility for the child where she deems it belongs. The baby is named James, which is shortened to Jims. Even without possessive punctuation, the name makes ownership apparent. The baby does not belong to Rilla, but to James Anderson, and by extension, to the patriarchal society against which Rilla is rebelling.

Despite her attempt to distance herself from the child, Rilla's affection for him grows. It begins with a sense of pride in Jims' development: ". . . he was certainly growing. And there were times when Rilla felt sure that it was not merely a pious hope but an absolute fact that he was getting decidedly better looking. Sometimes she felt quite proud of him . . ." (*RI* 82). Part of her pride grows out of the establishment of her own set of rules for his care. She is in control of his development, and he is flourishing. Rilla may not want to love the baby, but she desperately

wants to be in control and to demonstrate her skill.

Rilla has made a considerable effort to remain unattached to Jims. However, his need for her warmth and comfort finally breaks through her reserve and she recognizes her love for him. One night Jims begins to cry and will not stop. Letting her emotions overcome her belief that picking him up would constitute spoiling him, Rilla surrenders to his needs:

> Suppose, she thought, I was a tiny helpless creature only five months old. . . .
>
> Suppose there wasn't a human being anywhere who loved me. . . .
>
> Wouldn't I cry, too? Wouldn't I feel just so lonely and forsaken and frightened that I'd *have* to cry?
>
> . . . And then, as she held him close to her in the darkness, suddenly Jims laughed -- a real, gurgly, chuckly, delighted, delightful laugh.
>
> . . . Then she knew she wanted to kiss him and she did. . . . [S]omething delightful and yearning and brooding seemed to have taken possession of her. She had never felt like this before.
>
> . . . [S]he realized that -- at last -- she loved her war-baby. (*RI* 93-94)

Yet despite this development, Rilla takes care to point out that these are exceptional circumstances, that she has not discovered a love for all babies as a result of her experience: "'I'm not a bit fonder of babies in the abstract than ever I was,' said Rilla, frankly" (*RI* 184). She continues to struggle against the constructions of feminine behaviour which would relegate her to the role of passive heroine, and eventually to the shadows of motherhood.

With Jim Anderson's pending return, it becomes apparent that Rilla will have to give up her baby. But, by a twist of fate, Rilla will be allowed to have some control in his life. An

eccentric woman, Mrs. Pitman, was so impressed by Jims that she leaves five thousand dollars in trust for him, to be administered by Rilla. And as Rilla remarks in her diary: "'Certainly Jims was born lucky. I saved him from slow extinction at the hands of Mrs. Conover -- Mary Vance saved him from death by diphtheritic croup. . . . And he tumbled . . . right into this nice little legacy'" (*RI* 265). Here she makes clear that although the baby may be Anderson's, his existence and his growth are a credit to the capability and care of the women who have touched his little life. While Jims' new mother, a lovely and capable woman, is no exception here, the reader cannot help feeling that Rilla is being denied what is rightfully hers on the basis of affection and hard work. However, as it is James Anderson's patriarchal right to decide who cares for his child, Rilla must fade into the background, and must do so gracefully and decorously, as is expected of a young, unmarried woman. A source of her heroism is being denied her by social convention.

Rilla's relationship with her brother Walter is another example of Rilla's capacity for heroism. Her love for him is a driving force: "Rilla loved Walter with all her heart. . . . She would have *died* for Walter if it would have done him any good . . . " (*RI* 13). Her devotion exceeds the affection of siblings, and more closely resembles the worship of an ideal. Yet at the same time, it is representative of Rilla's desire for equality. She wants to share everything with him, to support and sustain him, and to experience the same in return: "'*I* tell *him* everything -- I even show him my diary. And it hurts me *dreadfully* when he doesn't tell *me* things. He shows me all his poems, though. . . . Oh, I just live in the hope that some day I shall be to Walter what Wordsworth's sister Dorothy was to him" (*RI* 13-14). And the advent of the war establishes the desired connection.

Because of her unconditional acceptance, Walter comes to rely on Rilla's support. More

than anyone else, she accepts his reluctance to enlist, for she understands how difficult it would be for his poetic soul to face the horror of the battlefield. Rilla offers herself to him as a comforting haven: "She was so glad he didn't want to go -- for just one minute she had been horribly frightened. And it was so nice to have Walter confiding his troubles to her -- to *her*, not Di. She didn't feel so lonely and superfluous any longer" (*RI* 47). Walter needs her, and the bond formed between them is gratifying for Rilla: "They comforted and strengthened each other. . . . Rilla was glad to be made the confidante of his struggles -- to sympathize with and encourage him. She was of importance to somebody" (*RI* 48). The reciprocity of this relationship satisfies her need for equality.

Walter makes it clear that he depends upon her support: "'Rilla-my-Rilla, if it weren't for your letters -- your dear, bright, merry, funny, comical, *believing* letters -- I think I'd give up'" (*RI* 81). As a result, she takes it upon herself to make up for all of his troubles, to put herself between him and the world: "'. . . I'm going to love him *hard* and cheer him up and *make* him laugh as he used to. It seems to me that every day of my life Walter means more to me'" (*RI* 100). Walter's need for Rilla's support and confidence makes her powerful, in effect turning traditional gender roles upside down.

Her pride at Walter's heroism on the front is another example of how she holds him up as an ideal: "Rilla was beside herself with delight. It was her dear Walter who had done this thing . . . it was Walter who had dashed back from the safety of the trench to drag in a wounded comrade who had fallen on No-man's-land. . . . What a thing to be the sister of such a hero!"(*RI* 166). Because of this exalted notion of him, his death is a shattering blow for her. But, Rilla refuses to accept that what Walter stood for could be extinguished: ". . . Walter, of the glorious gift and the

splendid ideals, *still lived*, with just the same gift and just the same ideals. *That* could not be destroyed -- *these* could suffer no eclipse. The personality that had expressed itself in that last letter . . . could not be snuffed out by a German bullet" (*RI* 190). In fact, Rilla will ensure this through her own actions. In his letter Walter charges her to follow the path he envisions for her: "I've a premonition about you Rilla. . . . I think Ken will go back to you -- and that there are long years of happiness for you by-and-by. And you will tell your children of the *Idea* we fought and died for -- teach them it must be *lived* for as well as died for, else the price paid for it will have been given for nought. This will be part of *your* work, Rilla'" (*RI* 192). And, as with anything he asked of her, Rilla unquestioningly accepts his dictum, determined to live by his code: "'I will keep faith, Walter,' she said steadily. 'I will work -- and teach -- and learn -- ... through all my years, because of you and because of what you gave when you followed the call'" (*RI* 193). His advice is the rule by which she intends to live her life. His vision affects all of her decisions, even at the sacrifice of her heroic desire for equality and individuality.

Rilla's romance frames the novel; thus while it is only one thread which weaves throughout the story of her development, its nature as both introduction and conclusion implies that it is of primary significance in her life. Kenneth Ford first appears at the dance at the Four Winds lighthouse as the object of Rilla's youthful infatuation. He is described as ". . . awesomely clever, with the glamour of a far-away city and a big university hanging around him. He had also the reputation of being a bit of a lady-killer. But that probably accrued to him from his possession of a laughing, velvety voice which no girl could hear without a heartbeat, and a dangerous way of listening as if she were saying something that he had longed all his life to hear" (*RI* 29). Rilla craves his attention, but as he is a friend of her older siblings, she believes he must still regard her

as a child. But, as she formerly only would have dreamed: "He was looking for her -- he was here beside her -- he was gazing down at her with something in his dark grey eyes that Rilla had never seen in them" (*RI* 29).

However, while Rilla sees his attention as extraordinary, the reader has reservations right from the beginning. His presence seems to transform her into the child she is trying to leave behind her: "Rilla had lisped in early childhood; but she had grown out of it. Only on occasions of stress and strain did the tendency re-assert itself. She hadn't lisped for a year; and now at this very moment, when she was so especially desirous of appearing grown up and sophisticated, she must go and lisp like a baby!" (*RI* 30). It is apparent that Rilla is immediately placed in a subordinate position.

Furthermore, Ken maintains a very possessive view of her. Adopting Walter's pet name for her, Ken calls her 'Rilla-my-Rilla,' "with just the faintest suggestion of emphasis on the 'my'" (*RI* 30). Observing her looking shyly at her feet, "Kenneth reflected that Rilla Blythe was going to be the beauty of the Ingleside girls after all. He wanted to make her look up -- to catch again that little, demure, questioning glance. She was the prettiest thing at the party, there was no doubt of that" (*RI* 30). There is certainly an element of acquisitiveness in this, implying that it is only Rilla's beauty in which Ken is interested. In essence, he objectifies her.

Significantly, with the announcement of war, Rilla is quickly displaced in Ken's mind. All of his attention is concentrated upon the promise of battle, leaving her neglected and rejected: "Ever since Jack Elliott's announcement, she had sensed that Kenneth was no longer thinking about her. She felt suddenly lonely and unhappy" (*RI* 34). Even a flirtation and a dance with another young man do not regain his attention: "Rilla went, knowing Kenneth didn't care whether

she went or stayed. An hour ago on the sand-shore he had been looking at her as if she were the only being of any importance in the world. And now she was nobody. His thoughts were full of this Great Game which was to be played out on blood-stained fields with empires for stakes -- a Game in which womenkind could have no part" (*RI* 35). She has been effectively excluded and relegated to the feminine sphere of experience.

Ken leaves town without saying good-bye, and Rilla is certain that it will be the end of things: "He told Nan to say good-bye to Spider for him and tell me not to forget him wholly in my absorbing maternal duties. If he could leave such a frivolous, insulting message as that for me it shows plainly that our beautiful hour on the sandshore meant *nothing* to him and I am not going to think about him or it again'" (*RI* 71). But, when she hears from him again, she is sent into further confusion, as his interest in her is unequally balanced by his interest in the war: "He has got a lieutenant's commission and expects to go overseas in midsummer, so he wrote me. There wasn't much else in the letter -- he seemed to be thinking of nothing *but* going overseas. I shall not see him again before he goes -- perhaps I will *never* see him again. Sometimes I ask myself if that evening at Four Winds was all a dream. It might as well be -- it seems as if it happened in another life lived years ago -- and everybody has forgotten it but me'" (*RI* 99). While Ken's continued letters make it clear that she is more than a friend's sister, Rilla cannot be sure what role she is supposed to play in his life. He leaves her wrestling with uncertainty: "Had he forgotten her completely? If he did not come she would know that he had. Perhaps there was even -- some other girl back there in Toronto. Of course there was. She was a little fool to be thinking about him at all. She would *not* think about him" (*RI* 129).

When Ken does come to see her before he goes overseas, Montgomery reestablishes the

fact that Rilla is subordinate to him. Again her communication is marked by a lisp: she responds to his queries with "'Yeth -- yeth'" and "'Of courthe'" (*RI* 130). Nevertheless, Rilla is excited by the prospect of romance: "She . . . built a crystal castle of dreams, all a-quiver with rainbows. Ken wanted to see *her* -- to see her *alone*. . . . She would entertain Ken on the veranda -- it would be moonlight -- she would wear her white georgette dress and do her hair *up* -- yes, she would. . . . Oh, how wonderful and romantic it would be! Would Ken say *anything* -- he must mean to say *something* or why should he be so particular about seeing her alone?" (*RI* 131). Even so, she remains confused: "How handsome and tall Kenneth looked in his lieutenant's uniform! It made him seem older, too -- so much so that Rilla felt rather foolish. Hadn't it been the height of absurdity for her to suppose that this splendid young officer had anything special to say to *her*, little Rilla Blythe of Glen St. Mary?" (*RI* 131-32).

The situation is further complicated by the fact that little Jims wakes up and will not be consoled. Thus, Rilla's romantic rendezvous includes the baby: "It was, no doubt, a ridiculous thing to sit and cuddle a contrary war-baby when your best young man was making his farewell call but there was nothing else to be done" (*RI* 133). But this turn of events has an unusual effect upon Ken: "In the dim moonlight, as she sat with her head bent over little Jims . . . he thought she looked exactly like the Madonna that hung over his mother's desk at home. He carried that picture of her in his heart to the horror of the battlefields of France. He had had a strong fancy for Rilla Blythe ever since the night of the Four Winds dance; but it was when he saw her there, with little Jims in her arms, that he loved her and realized it" (*RI* 134). With this picture, Rilla is constructed as everything he wants her to be, the epitome of feminine domesticity. He is determined to stake his claim with a kiss and a promise that she will not let anyone else kiss her

until he comes back. But, Rilla is still left with questions which will not be answered until and unless he returns from the battlefield: " 'I wonder,' she said to herself, 'if I am, or am not, engaged to Kenneth Ford'" (*RI* 139). While he has extracted a promise from her, he has voiced no commitment himself.

She has no real assurances that his words before he left guarantee her anything upon his return. And as the war drags on, his letters give her little clue of what to expect:

> 'His letters are all rather short now -- and he doesn't *often* slip into those dear little sudden sentences I love so much. Sometimes I think he has forgotten all about the night he was here to say good-bye -- and then there will be just a line or a word that makes me think he remembers and always will remember. For instance to-day's letter hadn't a thing in it that mightn't have been written to any girl, except that he signed himself 'Your Kenneth,' instead of 'Yours, Kenneth,' as he usually does. Now, *did* he leave that 's' off intentionally or was it only carelessness?' (*RI* 230)

This is an unsettling remark as Rilla constructs herself as insignificant in his life. If his commitment to her may be made or undone with the slip of a pen, the implications are that any further commitments are equally tenuous. A future with Ken does not seem especially secure. Furthermore, if Rilla constructs herself as insignificant, she has begun to relinquish her identity as a hero for that of a heroine.

Although Rilla actively determines that she wants to marry Ken, her motivation seems to be that this is a possible future, unlike her other options, for which she does not feel a conscious dislike: "'. . . I never had any hankering for a college course, and even now it doesn't appeal to me.

I'm afraid I'm rather devoid of ambition. There is only *one thing* I really want to be -- and I don't know if I'll be it or not. If not -- I don't want to be *anything*. . . . I want to be Kenneth Ford's wife!'" (*RI* 231). Furthermore, Walter's last words compel her to believe that this is the one future she is supposed to follow; it is what Walter would have wanted. In addition, as the war draws to a close, Rilla is left without purpose. She is no longer fifteen, so she cannot return to life as she once knew it, even if she wanted to. At nineteen, she must choose a serious purpose to satisfy the emptiness of her future: "Just then she was not finding it easy to keep faith. All the rest seemed to have some special aim or ambition about which to build up their lives -- she had none. And she was very lonely, horribly lonely. Jem had come back -- but he was not the laughing boy-brother who had gone away in 1914 and he belonged to Faith. Walter would never come back. She had not even Jims left. All at once her world seemed wide and empty . . ." (*RI* 275-76).

Thus, when Ken returns, the resolution seems obvious, whether or not it is the right one. Significantly, Rilla does not even recognize Ken upon his return: "A man in khaki was standing on the steps -- a tall fellow, with dark eyes and hair, and a narrow white scar running across his brown cheek. Rilla stared at him foolishly for a moment. Who was it?"(*RI* 276). Intellectually she knows it is he: "Of course, it was Ken -- but he looked so much older -- he was so much changed -- that scar -- the lines about his eyes and lips -- her thoughts went whirling helplessly" (*RI* 277). Rilla's confusion and reluctance are both obvious and ominous. Nevertheless, Ken demands reassurance that she is still his possession: "'*Is* it Rilla-*my*-Rilla?' he asked meaningly" (*RI* 277). He gives her no time to consider the commitment made four years ago by a girl, not a woman. In his mind, any change in her is purely physical.

Significantly, when Rilla does speak, her lisp returns, revealing the fact that the years have

not altered the balance of power, despite her heroic development:

> Emotion shook Rilla from head to foot. Joy -- happiness -- sorrow -- fear -- every passion that had wrung her heart in those four years seemed to surge up in her soul for a moment as the deeps of being were stirred. She tried to speak; at first voice would not come. Then --
>
> 'Yeth,' said Rilla. (*RI* 277)

As Denyse Yeast asserts, with these closing words "Montgomery subtly suggests that in patriarchally-defined relationships with men, strong women are infantilized" (*Articulating* 135). Rilla has been relegated, once and for all, to the role of heroine. Her dreams of equality and self-determination are turned to dust.

In a 1917 entry in her journal, Montgomery writes of her cousin Frede's marriage to Cameron MacFarlane: "A war marriage to a bridegroom who is on his last leave is a dubious thing" (*Journals* 2.216-217). Certainly the same could be said of an engagement like Rilla's. Significantly Montgomery's 1918 description of Frede's nature is reminiscent of her characterization of Rilla:

> I have never been able to picture Frede as a wife, living a domestic existence in a home of her own. I have tried. But always my imagination has met a blank wall. . . . I cannot rid myself of the odd, haunting feeling that Frede is not for calm domestic joys and tame house-mothering. In my thought she still 'waves her wild tail and walks by her wild lone', like Kipling's cat. That has always been her way of describing herself. It is a true one. Frede always gives the impression of walking her chosen way alone and independent -- not as Cam MacFarlane's housekeeper

> and sock-mender -- though capable, well-trained Frede can darn socks and run a house admirably. Only -- it is not the essence of her. (*Journals* 2.274).

The same is certainly true of Rilla. While she has the skills to be a 'housewifely, cookly creature,' one could certainly assert that this is not the essence of her. This existence denies her essential drive and exuberant love of life. As Montgomery envisioned the future for Frede, the reader envisions the future for Rilla: "I fear she will not be happy or contented after the novelty of her own home wears away" (*Journals* 2.274).

In 1921, Montgomery writes of *Rilla of Ingleside*: "It is dedicated to Frede's memory. I wish she could have read it" (*Journals* 3.17). Thus, it is safe to say that the similarity between the character of Rilla and the nature of Frede is not likely to be accidental. Just as their characters are similar, it is logical that their fates will be similar. As Frede was happy as a single woman, engaged in a domestic career as a teacher of household science, Rilla is happy in her task of raising Jims and running the Junior Red Cross. It does not necessarily follow that she will be happy in the traditional domestic role as a wife. While it is tempting to hope that this will not be the case for Rilla, that ". . . she will continue to cultivate the speaking out and the speaking up that the war has released in its womankind" (Epperly 130), Montgomery suggests the reverse. Rilla seems destined to lose her voice, like her mother, and to end up unhappy and unsatisfied with the traditional role in which she finds herself. Her struggle to establish her individuality, to enjoy a heroic existence, has been thwarted by the social convention of submissive femininity. Like many of Montgomery's other heroines, Rilla has been definitively silenced by her lover.

Chapter Four
"A Girl Held Prisoner": Freedom and Belonging in *Mistress Pat*

Mistress Pat (1935) has received little critical recognition, and those who have examined the text have summarily dismissed it as unrealistic and poorly developed. Jane Cowan Fredeman describes the novel as an illustration ". . . of how fantasy perpetuated can sour a life for an adult who will not let it go . . ." (67). Theodore Scheckels finds the novel dissatisfying as ". . . the only structural principle governing [it] seems to be Pat's obsessive love of her place, Silver Bush" (533). Jean Little writes: "I could not understand her stifling fear of change. It seemed not only excessive but silly. . . . As a niece of mine, an ardent Montgomery fan, succinctly put it, 'Pat's really quite dumb'" (77). Elizabeth Epperly describes the novel as "one of the saddest books Montgomery wrote," where "the pervasive tone of the book is grieving" and "Pat seems fixated on change and decay and death" (217). Leslie Goddard Scanlon asserts that "[a]n unrelieved domestic scene, episodes repetitious of Pat's obsessive love for Silver Bush, and the final overcoming of her delusion by reality, are too far removed from the aura of authenticity that makes the other novels satisfying" (115).

What troubles the critics the most is Pat's attachment to Silver Bush. Fredeman perceives that "Silver Bush and her devotion to it were not her life but her protection against it . . ." (66). Similarly, Epperly contends that ". . . the concentration on beauty is the perverse fuel that confirms Pat in her self-destructive choice of the thing over her soul. . . . Pat questions virtually none of the forces that bind her to the home" (213); furthermore, Pat is ". . . possessed by her own love of the literal house she lives in and a willing slave to clan traditions" (212). Scheckels maintains that Silver Bush "has entrapped her psychologically" (533). Lastly, Scanlon concludes

that "[s]o strong is her 'house consciousness' . . . that she creates for herself the fantasy that Silver Bush is a living entity whose spirit depends on her for continuity" (105).

I contend that these criticisms of the novel have arisen from either a misreading or a careless reading of the text. In their evaluations of *Mistress Pat*, all of these individuals have assumed that Silver Bush is only a physical place, that it must be interpreted within the novel as a 'literal house.' Epperly hints at another possible reading in her overview of Montgomery's works when she states that "[f]or Montgomery's heroines 'home' includes an awareness of the centred self; 'home' is an attitude as well as a place" (8). Ironically, she fails to apply this theory to *Mistress Pat*. I must argue that Silver Bush is more than an element of the setting. It is a symbolic or metaphorical entity which is integral to our understanding of both Pat, and ultimately, of the novel. Silver Bush and Pat are, in fact, inseparable, not because Pat is obsessive or deluded, but because Silver Bush is representative of the identity which Pat has created for herself. For Pat, Silver Bush is the physical embodiment of her desires and ideals. Thus, anything which threatens Silver Bush, Pat perceives as threatening both her identity and her future.

If identity is central to the novel, then we must ask, who is Pat? Elizabeth Epperly describes her as "morbidly afraid of change" and "unwilling to let people or things undergo any transformation, however positive" (212). She further describes her as ". . . an unintentionally depressing study in unconsciousness and in domesticity turned into self-imprisonment" (Epperly 212). Scanlon notes that Pat's name is "ambiguous," and could be either masculine or feminine. Thus, she perceives that "[p]art of her development must include the realization of the sterility of the life she has chosen for herself as mistress of a house, and an appreciation of her role as a woman" (Scanlon 105). What both critics note here is that Pat does not conform to conventional

notions of feminine behaviour. She has adopted a view of the world and its workings which is in direct opposition to traditional gender expectations.

As Jennie Rubio points out, in a novel of development, ". . . [the] post-adolescent girl [is] desperately trying to understand why and how she is supposed to fit into the cultural script" (37). In this process, "[w]hereas young men are encouraged to be autonomous, individualistic, and self-confident, young girls are encouraged to complement these qualities by fearing independence and separation from community . . ." (J. Rubio 37). Her development is an agenda over which the young girl has little control; she ". . . is pushed and pulled into the cultural script of gender codes whether she wants to be or not. Her immediate elders seek to write her as a cultural text. Even many seemingly well-meaning adults, who appear to encourage growth, are in fact channelling it into avenues which are more socially recognizable . . ." (J. Rubio 38).

However, Pat, whose very name indicates her reluctance to adopt female gender codes, fights this process. She wants to create her own cultural script, where she can be autonomous, independent, and self-confident while still belonging to a defined community. Pat is not afraid of growth; she is afraid of having her growth inhibited by the social conventions of marriage. To protect herself, Pat has created the 'Silver Bush identity' which characterizes her approach to life. She wants to be the unmarried mistress of Silver Bush, its soul and the comfort of its occupants. This is the primary focus of Montgomery's domestic novel of a young woman's eleven year coming of age.

Throughout the novel, Pat's dissimilarity to those around her is emphasized. On the first page, the reader is told: "But then, Pat, so her family always said, was just a little different from other people, too" (*MP* 1). Judy, the family's devoted housekeeper identifies Pat as having a ". . .

strange little spark of difference that set [her] off by [her]self and made a barrier, however slight and airy it might be, between [Pat] and [her] kind" (*MP* 185). Aunt Helen is disturbed by Pat's difference. She says of her: "'A girl who would rather ramble in the woods than go to a dance. Don't tell me she's normal'" (*MP* 181).

Yet despite Pat's difference, she is attractive to those around her. The reader is told that "Pat loved to see things and people happy; and she herself had the gift, than which there is none more enviable, of finding great pleasure in little things" (*MP* 11). She finds much of this pleasure in the world around her: "How terrible it must be to not see and *feel* beauty. . . . It seems to me that every time I look out of a window the world gives me a gift'" (*MP* 55). Furthermore, Pat passes this pleasure on to others: "People were to seek Pat from birth till death because she gave them the gift of laughter" (*MP* 43).

However, while Pat finds beauty around her and is companionable, she is not a social being. She is identified as having a ". . . not very passionate love of social life" (*MP* 27). Pat has little interest in beaus. Judy calls the boys in Pat's past "mere experiments" (*MP* 2) and her sister Rae reflects that Pat "'. . . really . . . does want to be an old maid . . .'" (*MP* 27). The reader is told that "[a]ll she really wanted, or seemed to want, was to run Silver Bush and take care of her mother . . . who was a bit of an invalid . . . and see that as few changes as possible came into existence there" (*MP* 2).

Change is the one factor in her life which Pat fears because it encompasses things beyond her control. While Scanlon identifies Pat's fear of change as a refusal to accept progress (107), I would argue the opposite. Many of the changes which frighten Pat are those things which interfere with her ability to control her own destiny or identity, things which impede her progress

as an individual. As Pat puts it, "I don't mind changes that mean things *coming* as much as changes that mean things *going*'" (*MP* 14). Judy, the comical Irish housekeeper remembers how Pat "'. . . always hated to give up any av [her] ould clothes . . .'" (*MP* 145), which makes an explicit connection between change and identity. Furthermore, Pat's reflection that "[s]omehow, she always felt safe from change in that garden" (*MP* 154) illustrates the connection between growth and change. Pat feels that "'. . . life seems to be just change . . . change . . . change. Everything changes but Silver Bush. It is always the same and I love it more every day of my life'" (*MP* 144). Thus, if Silver Bush is her integral identity, then Pat is taking comfort in the fact that she is a constant, that she has a clear direction and a place in life which cannot be destroyed or denied her. Pat recognizes that life will try to shake this foundation, but her self-confidence has grown with age. Pat states: "'. . . I never give way to despair as I used to long ago. Rae, I've learned to accept change even though I can never help dreading it . . . never can understand people who actually seem to like it" (*MP* 247).

The connection between place and person is made clear in the way that the virtues of Silver Bush are paralleled to the characteristics which make Pat unique. Silver Bush is a warm and accepting place: "There had always been so much laughter at Silver Bush that you felt the very walls seemed soaked in it. It was a house where you felt welcome the moment you stepped into it. It took you in . . . rested you" (*MP* 2). It is also literally and figuratively a shelter from the storm: "In the stormy evenings Silver Bush, snug and sheltered, holding love, laughed defiance at the grey night of driving snow" (*MP* 92). Even its contents reflect the atmosphere of love:

> 'The things in this house *are* nice,' said Cuddles, as she rubbed at the spoons. 'I wonder why. They're not really so handsome but they're *nice*.'

> 'They're loved, that's why,' said Pat softly. 'They've been loved and cared for for years.' (*MP* 34)

Like Pat, Silver Bush is warm, loving, comforting and full of laughter. Both nourish the soul.

The comments of other characters clarify the connection between Pat and Silver Bush. Uncle Brian says, "'Silver Bush isn't her house . . . it's her religion'" (*MP* 2), revealing that her 'Silver Bush identity' equates with the moral code by which Pat lives her life. Rae's recognition, "'I think she'd die if she ever had to leave it'" (*MP* 11), reveals that this identity is integral to Pat's spirit. Without Silver Bush, the essence which is Pat will perish.

If Silver Bush is representative of Pat's identity, then her reflections upon the house may be seen as assertions of her self-worth. She is a self-contained and contented individual. The narrator tells us: "She loved her home with a passion. She was deeply loyal to it ... to its faults as well as its virtues . . . though she would never admit it had any faults. Every small thing about it gave her the keenest joy" (*MP* 2). When she indicates that it holds everything she loves -- "Everything she loved best was safe under her roof. The house seemed breathing softly and contentedly in its sleep. Life was very sweet" (*MP* 36) -- Pat is relishing in her own completeness. Similarly, her need to keep the house in order -- "The house, after all the revel and excitement, had a dishevelled, cynical, ashamed look. Pat longed to fall upon it and restore it to serenity and self-respect" (*MP* 51) -- is indicative of the qualities she values in herself. Keeping house and keeping self are parallel activities to her. Pat's friend Suzanne describes keeping house as ". . . holding it fast against the world . . . against all the forces trying to tear it open" (*MP* 115), which exactly describes Pat's attempts to maintain the integrity of her identity against the force of social pressures. Because Pat and the house are indivisible entities, Pat sees any threat to, or slur

against, the house is an act of aggression against her personally. Thus, when Suzanne is said to have laughed at Silver Bush and called it old-fashioned, Pat is horrified and vows "[b]ut never again" (*MP* 108). She believes that those who do not value Silver Bush cannot possibly value her.

It is Silver Bush, Pat's created identity, which sustains her life. When she is troubled, Pat reflects that ". . .Silver Bush made everything bearable. [She] loved it more with every passing year and all the little household rites that meant so much to her. Always when she came home to Silver Bush its peace and dignity and beauty seemed to envelop her like a charm. Nothing very terrible could happen here" (*MP* 161). She is grounded by everything which Silver Bush represents: "Pat . . . paused for a moment to gloat over Silver Bush before going in. She always did that when coming home from anywhere. . . . It was fascinating to look at the door and realise that by just opening it one could step into beauty and light and love" (*MP* 184). Silver Bush is a source of comfort: "Silver Bush looked very beautiful in the faint beginning moonlight . . . her own dear Silver Bush. It still welcomed her . . . it was still hers, no matter what changes came and went" (*MP* 195). It represents growth: "Her love for Silver Bush had suffered no abatement . . . nay, it had seemed to deepen and intensify with the years, as other loves passed out of her life, as other changes came . . . or threatened to come" (*MP* 253). Its virtues are her virtues.

It is the 'Silver Bush identity' which allows Pat to justify her rejection of social convention. If she has Silver Bush to devote her life to, she does not need to marry: "Her whole world had been temporarily wrecked . . . ruined . . . turned upside down, but nothing had really changed in Silver Bush. There was no longer anything to come between her and it . . . never would be again. She was through with love and all its counterfeits. Henceforth Silver Bush would have no rival in her heart. She could live for it alone. There might be some hours of loneliness. But there was

something wonderful even in loneliness. At least you belonged to yourself when you were lonely" (*MP* 258).

However, in a world governed by the conventions of pairing up, a solitary identity like Pat's can be problematic. The older she gets, the more of what sustains her belongs in the past: "She developed a taste for taking lonely walks by herself among the twilight shadows. They seemed to be better company than she found in the sunlight. She came back from them looking as if she were the band of grey shadows herself. . . . It seemed . . . that the child, on those lone rambles, was trying to warm herself by some fire that had died out years ago" (*MP* 267-68). It is apparent that Pat remembers fondly the days of pleasure before she felt the need to defy convention, and that she wishes to return to that peace: "That shut door was a door of dreams through which she might slip into the Silver Bush of long ago. For a fleeting space she had a curious feeling that Judy and Tillytuck and Hilary and Rae and Winnie and Joe were all in there and if she could only go in quickly and silently enough she would find them. A world utterly passed away might be her universe once more" (*MP* 268). Pat is no longer separated only by difference; now she is separated by time as well. The further she moves from social convention, the greater her isolation.

What Pat desires most in life is friendship and equality. This is emphasized by her inability to sustain romantic relationships. Her desire for friendship is continually challenged by the conventions of a love relationship. As Denyse Yeast points out, the "[i]dealization of the concept of fraternity speaks to the legal, social and personal freedoms enjoyed by males in Montgomery's society . . . and the quality of friendship that is only possible with parity" (118). Pat's desire for friendship over love mirrors Montgomery's own. She writes in a letter to Mr. MacMillan, ". . . I

never remember thinking or wondering about any of my men friends 'Is he going to love me etc, etc.' Perhaps it was because I didn't want them to. They did very well as friends but would not have suited as lovers" (*My Dear* 34). Pat responds to romance in the same way: "She wished she could be a child again with no worries. To be sure she had thought she had worries then. . . . But there were no men then . . . no question of beaus and people who persisted in turning into lovers when all you wanted of them was to be friends" (*MP* 121). Pat favours her own independence over any thoughts of love. She says of her beaus: "No matter how nice they seemed while they were merely friends or acquaintances she could not bear them when they showed signs of developing into lovers. Silver Bush had no rival in her heart" (*MP* 101). Her personal identity of independence cannot be shaken. Even when Pat thought herself in love, she says: ". . . I always felt there was something wanting. I couldn't tell what but I knew it'" (*MP* 186). The something missing which she cannot voice is the assurance that when she links her name with a man's, she will still retain her own identity.

Pat's excuses for rejecting her suitors range from silly to serious. Of Joe Merritt, she says, "'. . . our taste in jokes is entirely different'" (*MP* 77). Of Dwight Madison, "Pat said she thought he snored and Cuddles remarked that he looked like spinach" (*MP* 93). Of Jim Mallory, she thought, "He was really a fine fellow. . . . [she] liked him terribly . . . almost as much as she liked Hilary and David" (*MP* 121), overtly labelling him an interesting friend and no more. Nevertheless, friendship is not enough for Pat to risk subsuming her identity in marriage. She reflects, "No, liking wasn't enough . . . little thrills and raptures weren't enough. There must be something more before she could dream of leaving Silver Bush" (*MP* 121). When Rex Miller sues for her hand, Pat says, "'Judy, this love business is no end of a bother. 'In life's morning march

when my bosom was young' I thought it must be tremendously romantic. But it's just a nuisance. Life would be much simpler if there were nothing of the sort'" (*MP* 129). Pat cannot reconcile herself to giving up her 'Silver Bush identity.'

Pat's relationship with Donald Holmes clearly demonstrates this. In him, her family felt that "Pat had met her fate" (*MP* 177). Certainly the lead-up to his proposal is romantic: "Pat herself believed she was in love . . . really in love. There were weeks of pretty speeches and prettier silences and enchanted moons and stars and kittens. . . . He was well-born, well-bred, good-looking and charming, and for the first time since the days of Lester Conroy Pat felt thrills and queer sensations generally" (*MP* 177). Pat determines to marry him, but the threat to her identity is apparent:

> Yes, she would marry Donald Holmes. She was quite sure she loved him. Pat stood up and waved a kiss to the Secret Field. When she next saw it she would belong to Donald Holmes.
>
> She had intended to call at Happiness on her way home . . . she had not been there all summer . . . but she did not. Happiness belonged to things that were . . . things that had passed . . . things that could never return. (*MP* 179)

Again, while Happiness is part of the physical setting, its metaphorical implications are obvious. If marriage to Donald will keep her from happiness, the implication is that marriage will result in the loss of her identity. Thus, at the last moment, once the question hangs in the air between them, Pat realizes that she cannot make this sacrifice: "The whole world had gone very stale and life seemed greyer than ashes. In a way she was actually disappointed. She would miss Donald horribly. But leave Silver Bush for him? Impossible!" (*MP* 180). Pat will keep her

independence.

Hearing of her refusal of the proposal, Uncle Tom warns her: "'If you don't watch out all the men will be grabbed. . . . Beaus aren't found hanging on bushes, you know,'" to which Pat responds, "'If they were it would be all right. . . . One needn't pick them then. Just let them hang'" (*MP* 180-81). While couched as a joke, the meaning of this is obvious. Pat would like nothing more than to be untroubled by the pressure to marry and surrender her identity to her husband.

Throughout the novel, Pat makes her desire to remain unmarried quite clear. When Rae asks her if she ever intends to get married, Pat responds: "'Oh . . . sometime perhaps . . . when I have to . . . but not for years and years. Why, Silver Bush couldn't spare me'" (*MP* 28). She means to stay devoted to the world she has created for herself. She reflects: "If it's foolish to love Silver Bush better than any man I'll always be a fool. . . . Why, I belong here. . . . I hope nobody will ever ask me to marry him again'" (*MP* 182). Even when she has made a commitment to marry David Kirk, Pat does her best to ignore the implications of the pending wedding. She says: "'*It* won't be a smart event. David and I will just slip away some day and be married. There isn't going to be any fuss,' . . . and turned the conversation to something else. She was very, very fond of David but things were nice just as they were. She did not want to think of marrying at all. The thought of leaving Silver Bush was not bearable" (*MP* 243). She will not reconcile herself to this fate.

Pat has other dreams of what her life might be like. It is suggested that at one point Pat intended to pursue a career. Her sister Winnie's husband, Frank, gives their new daughter the middle name of Patricia, "'. . . because he said if it hadn't been for [Pat] that child would never

have been born'" (*MP* 50). Pat responds to this comment by saying it is "'[j]ust some of his nonsense. He persists in thinking I gave up a career so that Winnie could get married'" (*MP* 50). As a career now appears to be beyond her reach, Pat envisions a life of domesticity and independence: "She liked to think of herself as a happy old maid and Sid a happy old bachelor, living gaily together all their lives, loving and caring for Silver Bush..." (*MP* 27). Pat wants the best of both worlds: a home and companionship without having to marry.

Quite simply, Pat finds pleasure in looking after Silver Bush, its contents and its people. Because her mother is an invalid, Pat assumes the role of mother for her younger sister: "She was far more worried over Rae's future than her own and mothered her to what Rae considered an absurd degree" (*MP* 98). She finds fulfillment in helping to manage the day to day affairs of the family:

> They planned and joked and walked in faint blue twilights and Sid told her everything and together they bullied Long Alec and Tillytuck when any difference of opinion came up. Between them they managed to get Silver Bush repainted, although Long Alec hated any extra expense as long as there was a mortgage on it. But Silver Bush looked beautiful . . . so white and trig and prosperous with its green shutters and trim. It warmed the cockles of Pat's heart just to look at it. And to hear Sid say once, gruffly, on their return one winter evening from a long prowl back to their Secret Field,
>
> 'You're a good old scout, Pat. I don't know what I'd have done without you these past two years.' (*MP* 194)

However, a shadow falls over Pat's satisfaction when her mother begins to recover from years of

illness: "But then mother was so much better . . . almost well . . . beginning to take her place in the family life again. It was like a miracle, everybody said. So Pat was happy and contented in spite of certain passing aches of loneliness which made themselves felt on wakeful nights when a grief-possessed wind wailed around the eaves" (*MP* 253). Ironically, what should be a blessing actually threatens Pat's security in life. If her mother gets well enough to take over her own role in the household, where does this leave Pat?

Sid's unexpected marriage also complicates Pat's plans for the future. Because of it, their relationship is strained and the dynamics of the household are drastically altered:

> For Pat's birthday had come and that evening Sid had brought May Binnie in and announced, curtly and defiantly, and yet with such a pitiful, beaten look on his face, that they had been married that day in Charlottetown.
>
> 'We thought we'd surprise you,' said May, glancing archly about her out of bold, brilliant eyes. 'Birthday surprise for you, Pat.' (*MP* 196-97)

Perhaps if Sid's marriage had been handled differently, or if he had chosen someone else, the situation would not be as threatening. But having Sid arrive home with a bride unannounced, and Pat's lifetime nemesis no less, is too much for Pat to take in stride: "Everything . . . *everything* . . . had changed in the twinkling of an eye. Sid was lost to her forever. . . . 'Our inheritance is turned to strangers and our house to aliens.' She had read that verse in her Bible chapter two nights ago and shivered over the picture of desolation it presented. And now it had come true in her own life . . . her life that a few hours ago had seemed so full and beautiful and was now so ugly and empty" (*MP* 197). May Binnie threatens Pat's place in Silver Bush.

Consequently, Pat's very identity is threatened: "The only feeling she was keenly conscious

of just then was a sick desire to get away from the light into a dark place where no one could see her . . . where she could hide like a wounded animal" (*MP* 197). Without Silver Bush she does not see herself as fully human. Because she cannot perceive a future in Silver Bush, she can perceive no future for her independent identity: "'Talk about the future! There isn't any future! If it had been anybody but May Binnie! I'm not the little fool I once was. I've known for long that Sid would marry sometime. Even when I couldn't help hoping he wouldn't I knew he would. But May Binnie!'" (*MP* 199). May represents the opposite of every value which Pat holds dear. This results in her feeling that: "'We can never be ourselves . . . our real selves . . . when she is about, Rae'" (*MP* 200).

Because May feels threatened by Pat, she does all she can to make changes to Silver Bush: "'She would do nothing but patch and change and tear up if she could have her way here,' Pat told Rae viciously" (*MP* 208). She shakes the very foundations of Pat's world. In fact, the change which would suit May most would be the removal of Pat from the household so she could have Silver Bush for herself:

> 'Rae, May doesn't want to have a house built on the other place . . . she wants to have Silver Bush. I've heard her talking to Sid . . . I couldn't help hearing . . . you know what her voice is like when she's angry. 'I'll never go to live on the Adams place . . . it would be so far out of the world . . . you can't move all them barns. You told me when you persuaded me to marry you that we would live at Silver Bush. And I'm going to . . . and it won't be under the thumb of your old-maid sister either. She's nothing but a parasite . . . living off your father when there's nothing now to prevent her from going away and earning her own living when I'm

here to run things.' She's doing her best to set Sid against us all . . . you know she is.' (*MP* 212-13)

No longer can Pat be certain of her place in life, of her independence and control.

This situation is largely responsible for Pat's decision to agree to marry her friend David Kirk. Perhaps in this seemingly non-threatening relationship she can preserve some of her independent identity. His age and experience are the features which attract her: ". . . she loved to talk with him. He had such a charming voice. Sometimes he was a little bitter but there was such a stimulating pungency about his bitterness. Like choke cherries. They puckered your mouth horribly but still you hankered after them. She would far rather sit here and talk to David than dance with boys who held you closer than you liked and paid you silly compliments . . ." (*MP* 128). But, as Rae correctly asserts, David's house is his most attractive feature: "'I think perhaps she'll never marry. She loves Silver Bush too much to leave it for any man. The best chance David has is that the Long House is so near Silver Bush that she could still keep an eye on it'" (*MP* 175). If Pat cannot be at home in Silver Bush, she can feel some of the same security in the Long House: "Whenever the door of the Long House clanged behind her it seemed to shut out the world, with its corroding discontents and vexations. Once, Pat thought with a stab of pain, she had felt that way when she went into Silver Bush" (*MP* 219). Pat is desperately hoping that the combination of friendship and proximity to her spiritual home will help her to hold on to her identity.

Nevertheless, Pat does her best to avoid making this decision: "Was David by any chance proposing to her? . . . Oh, why must life be such an uncertain thing? You never knew where you were . . . you never had security . . . you never knew when there might not be some dreadful bolt

from the blue. She would just pretend she hadn't heard David's question and go in" (*MP* 221). However, she also recognizes that much of her security is dependent upon this marriage:

> Which path should she take? David was going to ask her to marry him . . . she had known for a long time in the back of her mind that he would ask her if she ever let him. She was terribly fond of David. Life with him would be a very pleasant pilgrimage. Even a grey day was full of colour when David was around. She was always contented in his company. And his eyes were sometimes so sad. She wanted to make them happy. Was that reason enough for marrying a man, even one as nice as David? If she didn't marry him she would lose him out of her life. He would never stay at the Long House after Suzanne had gone. And she couldn't lose any more friends . . . she just couldn't. (*MP* 221)

There would be no question of accepting him if she were assured of a place in Silver Bush, but that was too uncertain to depend upon.

Pat's acceptance is coloured by this same uncertainty. To his proposal of marriage, she responds, "'I think I could'" (*MP* 222). Even Pat's justification for choosing to marry David hinges on the element of friendship, not romantic love: "'Mother dear, I'm terribly fond of David. We suit each other . . . our minds click. He loves the same things I do. I'm always happy with him . . . we'll be good chums'" (*MP* 222). Not only is he a friend, but David needs her: "'I'm just not capable of that sort of loving . . . or it doesn't last. David *needs* me. . . . I wouldn't marry him, Rae . . . I wouldn't marry anybody . . . if I knew I could go on living at Silver Bush. But if May stays here . . . and she means to . . . I can't. . . . I've always loved the Long House next to Silver Bush. I'll be near Silver Bush ... I can always look down on it and watch over it'" (*MP*

223). She is assured of some security in their relationship; she has something necessary to contribute. Moreover, the wedding is not imminent; thus, it is not threatening and can be easily ignored. Furthermore, the essence of their friendship will remain unchanged: "He and Pat were, as Pat frequently told herself, very happy in their engagement. They had such a nice friendly understanding. No nonsense. Just good comradeship and quiet laughter and a kiss or two. Pat did not mind David's kisses at all" (*MP* 233).

However, even David requires more commitment than this, and the end of their relationship is inevitable. He comes to the recognition that he is a convenience in her life: "'*I* think, dear . . . that your attitude, whether you realise it or not, is, 'I'd just as soon be married to you as any one, if I have to be married.' That isn't enough for me, Pat. No, you don't love me, though you've pretended you have . . . pretended beautifully, to yourself as well as me. I won't have you on those terms, Pat'" (*MP* 255). Pat protests, as she feels there are no other options left available to her: ". . . though she knew in her heart he was right . . . knew he had never been anything but a way out . . . knew that sometimes at three o'clock of night she had wakened and felt that she was a prisoner . . . she could not bear to lose him out of her life" (*MP* 256). Nevertheless, her response to the end of their engagement is telling: "The whole experience seemed unreal. Had David really told her he couldn't marry her? But away down under everything she knew she felt *free* . . . curiously free. She was almost a little dizzy with the thought of freedom . . . as if she had drunk some heady, potent wine" (*MP* 256). After vowing to have no more love affairs, Pat rejoices: "I'm free once more . . . free to love and live for Silver Bush. That's all that matters. Free! It's a wonderful word'" (*MP* 257). Independence is the most important aspect of her existence.

Friendship and equality are Pat's other treasured values. Hilary Gordon is depicted as the repository of these qualities. While he does not appear until the later chapters of the novel, through his letters Hilary is a continued presence. From the beginning, he is identified as a good friend and an integral part of Pat's childhood memories:

> 'Of course I've told him a dozen times he is to look upon Silver Bush as home. Do you remember how I used to set a light in this very window when I wanted him to come over?'
>
> 'And he niver failed to come, did he, Patsy? I'm almost belaving if ye set a light in this windy to-night he'd see it and come. Patsy dear,' . . . Judy's voice grew wheedling and confidential . . . 'do ye iver be thinking a bit about Jingle . . . ye know. . . .'
>
> Pat laughed, her amber eyes full of roguish mirth.
>
> 'Judy darling, you've always had great hopes of making a match between Hilary and me but they're doomed to disappointment. Hilary and I are chums but we'll never be anything else. We're *too* good chums to be anything else.' (*MP* 57)

Judy and Rae perceive Hilary as a romantic interest for Pat, but she is not inclined to agree. What Pat exhibits is a desire to relive the companionship of their childhood: "Pat had one of her moments of wishing passionately that Hilary was somewhere about . . . that they could join hands as of old and run across the old stone bridge over Jordan. Surely they had only to slip over the old bridge to find themselves in the old fairyland. They would go back to Happiness and the Haunted Spring, following the misty little brook through the old fields where the moonlight loved to dream . . ." (*MP* 64). Thus, when he broaches the issue of marriage, she refuses him as she

does her beaus: "'. . . always my best *friendly* love. Isn't that enough, Hilary, darling? Come home and enjoy these things and let us have one more summer of our old jolly companionship'" (*MP* 96). Pat is reluctant to believe that he even feels for her what he asserts he does:

'He really was in love with you, wasn't he, Pat?' [asked Rae]

'He thought he was. I knew he would get over that.' (*MP* 217)

Pat refuses to colour her memories of equality with the uncertainty that she associates with romantic love.

There is a sense throughout the novel that Pat is trying to hold on to something which has been inevitably altered. Hilary is a friend, but because of his romantic interest in her, their relationship can never be what it was when they were children and both wanted the same things of each other. Even Pat recognizes the change: ". . . Pat wistfully read it over three times in the hope of finding that elusive something Hilary's letters used to possess. It was nice, like all Hilary's letters. But it was the first for quite a long time . . . and it was a little remote, somehow . . . as if he were thinking of something else all the time he was writing it" (*MP* 214). At times she seems tempted by his dreams for life, but Pat is determined to retain her individual identity: "'I want to see the whole world,' he wrote. Pat shivered. The 'whole world' had a cold, huge sound to her. Yet for the first time the idea came into her head that it might be rather nice to see the world with Hilary or some such congenial companion. . . . But it would be more wonderful still to look at Silver Bush and know it for her own again . . . as she was afraid it never would be" (*MP* 214). She will not forfeit her independence, even for a treasured friend.

Hilary's visit serves to clarify Pat's understanding of their relationship. Her idea of Hilary and what is between them is rooted firmly in the past, in what they were as children. Pat says to

Rae: "I would be glad to see the Hilary who went away. . . . But will he be? He must have changed. We've all changed'" (*MP* 233). The knowledge that their friendship is based upon equality is sustaining for her: "'Of course we'll be strangers,' thought Pat miserably. But no . . . no. Hilary and she could never be strangers. To see him again . . . to hear his voice . . . she had not been thrilled like this for years . . ." (*MP* 233). Because of this equality and the implied lack of gender roles, as well as the emphasis upon past identities, Pat seeks to deny her engagement to David: "All at once she did something she couldn't account for. She pulled David's diamond and sapphire ring off her finger and dropped it in a tray on her table. She felt a thrill of shame as she did it . . . but she *had* to do it. There was some inner compulsion that would not be disobeyed" (*MP* 234). She rejects this outward symbol that she is a grown woman who must follow a cultural script. Consequently, it is the flavour of past identity which marks their reunion: "Pat and Hilary went back into the past. Its iridescence was over everything they looked at" (*MP* 237).

Upon seeing her again, Hilary recognizes the constancy of Pat's identity: "'Pat . . . I've years of things to say to you . . . but I'll say them all in one sentence . . . you haven't changed. Pat, I've been so terribly afraid you would have changed" (*MP* 235). Significantly, Hilary also remarks on the unchanged nature of Silver Bush: "'I've seen many wonderful abodes since I went away, Pat . . . palaces and castles galore . . . but I've never seen any place so absolutely *right* as Silver Bush. It's good to be here again and find it so unchanged'" (*MP* 237). However, in spite of this, there is already a hint that Hilary seeks to alter Pat's identity: "Hilary, looking at Pat, saw, as he had always seen, all his fancies, hopes, dreams in a human shape" (*MP* 235). He does not see her for what she is, only as what he wants her to represent.

Both are seeking to regain something which is lost: "Our walk back to Happiness! Was it

possible to walk back to happiness? At all events they tried it" (*MP* 238). This is a state which Pat reveals cannot be found without companionship: "'I haven't been here [to Happiness and the Haunted Spring] for years,' said Pat under her breath. 'I couldn't bear to come . . . alone . . . somehow" (*MP* 238). At some level they succeed in their quest, but their experience cannot accommodate their identity as man and woman: "It was all so like the old days. They were boy and girl again" (*MP* 238). Yet from the beginning, Pat also recognizes that they have left 'boy and girl' behind, and that 'man and woman' cannot share the equality she seeks: "'If this could last,' thought Pat" (*MP* 239).

May's announcement of Pat's engagement solidifies the reality of their mature identities: "Suddenly Hilary seemed very remote . . ." (*MP* 240). This turn of events prompts Hilary to declare his intentions, and any potential for companionship is lost:

> 'There's only one girl in my life . . . and you know who she is, Pat. I didn't think there was any hope for me but I felt I must come and see.'
>
> 'You'll find . . . some one yet. . . .'
>
> 'No . . . you've spoiled me for loving anyone else. There's only one *you*.'
>
> Pat said nothing more . . . there did not seem anything she could say. (*MP* 240)

Sexual politics and social conventions have turned their youthful equality to ashes. This is particularly bitter for Pat: "'I don't think he will ever come again to Silver Bush,' said Pat. Her voice was quiet but her very words seemed tears. 'Judy, why must there be so much bitterness in everything . . . even in what should be a beautiful friendship?'" (*MP* 241). She recognizes that the social expectations of women make her dreams impossible to fulfil. By verbalizing his own desires Hilary has permanently altered the dynamics of their friendship. This experience has

chipped away at one more block in the foundation of her identity.

With the demise of Pat's comfortable memories of equality, her entire constructed identity crumbles. Significantly, the physical Silver Bush burns to the ground: "Pat seemed to die a thousand deaths on that ride home. Yet when she got there she was curiously numb . . . terror seemed to have washed her being clean of everything. Even when she saw that terrible fire blazing against the grey November hillside she gave no sign . . . made no sound" (*MP* 269). Pat's vision of herself is destroyed and she is left without her individuality. Without her 'Silver Bush identity' she has nothing left, and thus lacks purpose and direction in life. As a result, Pat is isolated from those around her: "She had a terrible feeling that she did not belong anywhere . . . or to anybody . . . in this new sad lonely world" (*MP* 271). Her ties to her spiritual home have been permanently severed: "And the new house for Sid and May . . . a house without memories . . . would be built on the old foundation of Silver Bush. It would not be like the old Silver Bush. That was gone and the place thereof would know it no more" (*MP* 271). Her foundation will now support the identity of others, and what is left of who she was will be permanently obscured, like her. With the death of her identity, Pat seems to be approaching a physical death as well: "She felt horribly old. Her love for Silver Bush had kept her young . . . and now it was gone. Nothing was left . . . there was only a dreadful, unbearable emptiness" (*MP* 271). The fate of the bush itself, the namesake of the house -- and of Pat's identity -- is also indicative of her spiritual death: "It hurt Pat worse than anything else to see the dead stark trees of the birch grove. She shuddered as she recalled standing there on that fatal Sunday and seeing the flames ravage them. It had seemed to hurt her even more than seeing her home burn . . . those trees she had always loved . . . trees that had been akin to her. More than half the bush was killed" (*MP* 272). The

same is true of Pat. She is now a shell of herself.

Pat is rescued from her isolation by Hilary, but he immediately claims her as a possession: "'I've made you mine forever with that kiss,' he said triumphantly. 'You can never belong to anyone else'" (*MP* 273). As Epperly points out, "[t]he rescue itself is a reminder of powerlessness" (220). Pat has lost her independence and self-direction. But overwhelmed with gratitude and grasping at hope, Pat sees this as a new beginning for life: "Pat stood quivering with his arms about her. Life was not over after all . . . it was only beginning" (*MP* 273). However, her rescuer proposes to replace her created identity with another of his own design: "'I know what this tragedy of Silver Bush must have meant to you . . . but I've a home for you by another sea, Pat. And in it we'll build up a new life and the old will become just a treasury of dear and sacred memories . . . of things time cannot destroy" (*MP* 273). He goes on to describe to Pat the setting he has created for his image of her: "'. . . I found a spot . . . a spot I *recognized*, although I had never seen it before . . . a spot that *wanted* me. . . . That spot was just crying for a house to be built on it. So . . . I built one. It's waiting for you. It's a dear house, Pat . . . fat red chimneys . . . sharp little gables on the side of the roof. . . . It's painted white and has bottlegreen shutters like Silver Bush" (*MP* 274). Then he tells her: "'I've built the house, Pat . . . I've provided the body but you must provide the soul'" (*MP* 274). While not overtly stated, or perhaps even recognized by Hilary, the implication is that she must conform to his vision of her.

Pat seems comforted by the prospect of a future with Hilary: "They sat in a trance of happiness, savouring 'the unspent joy of all the unborn years; in the moonlight and waving shadows of the ancient graveyard where so many kind old hearts rested. They had been dust for many years but their love lived on. Judy had been right. Love did not . . . could not die" (*MP*

276). Susan Jones asserts that "Pat acquiesces graciously, even gladly, but . . . there is at least an element of compromise in her acceptance . . ." (88). However, it seems that the situation may be better described as a surrender. Pat has abandoned her dreams of independence for a future Hilary has planned on her behalf. Furthermore, the fact that their reunion occurs in a graveyard is unsettling, smothering any thoughts of joy in the image of death. Hilary's possessiveness is also overwhelming and potentially threatening. He says: "I've found something I once thought I'd lost forever and I won't be cheated out of a single moment'" (*MP* 277).

Prior events in the novel also help to contextualize the ending. Uncle Tom's resurrected romance with Mrs. Merle Merridew can be seen to parallel the relationship of Pat and Hilary. Pat comes to recognize Uncle Tom's fascination with the idea of rekindling the old romance: "To Uncle Tom his vanished Merle was not only Merle . . . she was youth, beauty, mystery, romance . . . everything that was lacking in the life of a rather bald, more than middle-aged farmer, domineered over by two maiden sisters" (*MP* 82). This is the spirit to which Pat also clings to when Hilary offers marriage. However, the fate of Uncle Tom's romance is not happy. He discovers that the passing years have changed them both too much for the old feeling to be recaptured. As Pat puts it: ". . . 'all that was left of his bright, bright dream' was dust and ashes. Poor mistaken Uncle Tom, who had imagined that the old magic could be recaptured" (*MP* 89). It is no more likely that Hilary and Pat can recapture 'the old magic' of Happiness and the Haunted Spring. By trying to retreat into the past, they have created a future which is destined to fail.

Montgomery herself comments on the dangers of marrying on the basis of friendship. In a letter to Mr. MacMillan, she writes: "I believe that for *friendship* there should be similarity; but for love there must be dissimilarity. . . . [F]rom *observation* I have decided that the happiest

marriages are between people who are not at all alike, while some that are unhappy do exist between people who are very much alike. The trouble seems to be that two people finding themselves very harmonious in friendship jump to the conclusion that it will be just the same and even better in marriage" (*My Dear* 27-28). This is the very mistake that Hilary and Pat have made, suggesting that Montgomery means for the reader to question both their wisdom and their future.

By concluding the story with their marriage, Montgomery has created a novel of which even Uncle Horace would approve. He exhorts: "I don't care a hoot for a book where they don't get properly married . . . or hanged . . . at the last. These modern novels that leave everything unfinished annoy me. . . . I like a nice snug tidy ending in a book with all the loose ends tucked in'" (*MP* 134). However, Pat's reminder, "'[b]ut things are often unfinished in real life'" (*MP* 134), makes it clear that Pat does not trust happily-ever-after endings, and there is no reason to believe that she would make an exception for her own life-story. The structure of the conclusion makes this apparent.

As ever, in the last line of the novel, Montgomery plants an image of imprisonment, implying that the romance of the moment only obscures the eventual truth of their relationship: "The old graveyard heard the most charming sound in the world . . . the low yielding laugh of a girl held prisoner by her lover" (*MP* 277). Pat has been destroyed, rebuilt, and possessed in the span of several pages, and the reader cannot help but feel that her future is as dark as the final setting. Her spirit died with Silver Bush, and will not be resurrected. While Scanlon suggests that "[a]s with all Montgomery heroines, union with the appropriate male figure signals for Pat the achievement of true knowledge of herself" (114), it is clear that Pat's self-knowledge and self-

direction have come to an end. The friendship and equality which characterized her childhood relationship with Hilary, and which Pat prized so highly, are consigned to the past. Hilary has forcefully demonstrated a superior position. The freedom which Pat felt in affirming her solitary 'Silver Bush identity' is something now forever denied her by marriage.

Chapter Five
"Only an Impossible Dream": Rising Above the Conventions of Romance in *A Tangled Web*

As with the four novels previously examined, *A Tangled Web* (1931) has received little critical attention and even less praise. Elizabeth Waterston compares the novel to "the conventional tales of 'Avonlea'" and asserts that they are "not really lifted into any newly mature vision" (*LMM* 21). Theodore Scheckels contends that it ". . . seems to know not what kind of book it is. It mixes generic conventions in a way that seems down-right clumsy and is not a feminist attempt to obliterate male analytical categories" (533).

Only Elizabeth Epperly makes some attempt to view the novel as markedly different from the bulk of Montgomery's production. She recognizes that "[o]nly one of the five main stories of the book deals with Montgomery's usual subject -- a young girl learning through pain and (varying degrees of) self-reflection to be a woman" (Epperly 244). Furthermore, Epperly asserts that Montgomery, through her study of the muddled romantic relationships of both young and older characters, ". . . tries to show women and men as similarly deluded and self-deluding and as equally entangled in a great pattern of events over which they have, paradoxically, both ultimate and little control" (248). Because of this, she concludes that ". . . the principles underlying Montgomery's comedy about equality are essentially female, sporadically feminist" (Epperly 248).

In the novel, Montgomery addresses the same concerns which we have encountered in the other works we have examined: the problem of identity, the desire for equality, and the conviction that the institution of marriage is ultimately entrapping. T.D. Maclulich argues that in *A Tangled Web*, ". . . Montgomery portrays young women who face a highly restrictive choice: they may

marry, or they may become old maids. For a woman to think of taking up a career is not considered respectable. . . . Despite her awareness of this female dilemma, Montgomery can imagine . . . only one resolution of this situation: the unhappy woman must finally acquire a man of her own" (464). However, he has completely ignored a significant thread in Montgomery's complex plot. In the story of Margaret, Montgomery defies a number of the conventions of romance as "Margaret finds romance and happiness without adult love or marriage . . ." (Epperly 245). Instead, Margaret achieves fulfillment by acquiring the home and child for which she has secretly yearned, and she retains her independence. Unlike so many of Montgomery's other heroines, Margaret escapes the marriage which promises to entrap her and is rewarded with the realization of her most cherished dreams of a home and a child of her own.

When the narrator introduces the characters assembled at Aunt Becky's levee, she begins with Margaret Penhallow. This primary position is an indication of her importance as a heroine in the novel. Hers may not be the only story, but with this ranking the narrator implies that she is both central and significant in the tale. Nevertheless, Margaret is not a traditional heroine. She is not ethereally beautiful like Kilmeny, or vivacious like Rilla. In both age and circumstances, she bears a closer resemblance to Pat or Valancy. She is described as "dreamy, poetical Margaret" (*TW* 16), and from the beginning the reader is told that her beauty is an internal quality, not an external feature. The narrator states: "She had no beauty herself, save in her overlarge, strangely lustrous eyes, and her slender hands -- the beautiful hands of an old portrait. Yet there was a certain attractiveness about her that had not been dependent on youth and had not left her with the years" (*TW* 16).

Margaret's gift to the world is her ability to create beauty. Her poetry, while

unappreciated, identifies her artist's soul, and she brings this same sensibility to her work as a dressmaker: "She spent her life making pretty clothes for other people and never had any for herself. Yet she took an artist's pride in her work and something in her starved soul sprang into sudden transforming bloom when a pretty girl floated into church in a gown of her making. *She* had a part in creating that beauty" (*TW* 16). However, this outlet for her creativity is not enough to satisfy her passionate soul. Margaret wants much more from life.

Like Valancy, Margaret finds consolation in dreams. However, she does not create a Blue Castle for herself: she creates her own Silver Bush. Unlike Valancy's Blue Castle, Margaret's retreat is born of reality: "Whispering Winds was the small secret which made poor Margaret's life endurable. It wound in and out of her drab life like a ribbon of rainbows. It was the little house on the Bay Silver side road where Aunt Louisa Dark had lived. . . . It was for sale but nobody had ever wanted to buy it -- nobody, that is, except Margaret, who had not money to buy anything and would have been hooted at if it were so much as suspected that she wanted to buy a house" (*TW* 71). Whispering Winds is representative of Margaret's search for a sense of belonging. She dreams of a spiritual home as well as a physical one.

Not only does Margaret dream of a place where she belongs, she dreams of belonging to someone. She does not fantasize about a man, but a child. Margaret ". . . wanted to adopt a baby. She knew the very kind of baby she wanted -- a baby with golden hair and great blue eyes, dimples and creases and adorable chubby knees. And sweet sleepy little kisses. Margaret's bones seemed to melt in her body as water when she thought of it. . . . All of her love was centered in her imaginary baby and her imaginary little house. . . . Yet she had no real hope of ever owning the house, while, if she could get married, she might be able to adopt a baby" (*TW* 17).

Significantly, Margaret cannot be the agent of her own fulfillment because she lacks the means to achieve her dreams. In her world, a home and family are bestowed on a woman only through marriage.

Marriage would do more than provide economic stability for Margaret; it would confer social status. As she reflects: "If you were married you were somebody. If not, you were nobody. In the Dark and Penhallow clan, anyhow" (*TW* 16). Here Montgomery points to the fact that "[a] Victorian woman suffered a severe loss of prestige as she aged if she remained unmarried. In a patriarchy, when a woman is not in a proper state of subordination, she is seen as a threat to social order and fear of her independence is translated into ridicule and denigration" (Yeast *Articulating* 49). Certainly, this has been Margaret's experience. Her clan makes it clear that she is the source of much laughter: "Cruel old Aunt Becky who had jeered at her and her poor little poems and her old-maidenhood before all the clan. Margaret knew that perhaps she *was* silly and faded and childish and unimportant and undesired, but it hurt to have it rubbed in so. She never harmed anyone. Why couldn't they leave her alone?" (*TW* 73). For Margaret, many of her troubles are the result of her single status in a society which asserts that women are to be part of a pair.

Consequently, none of Margaret's efforts to build a life for herself are given credence by her clan. As a spinster, Margaret is supposed to live in a constant state of waiting: "It was hard to grow old gracefully when you were always being laughed at because you were not young. But there was only one career for women in her clan. Of course you could be a nurse or a teacher or dressmaker, or something like that, to fill in the time before marriage, but the Darks and Penhallows did not take you seriously" (*TW* 74). Socially, she is not truly a woman as long as she

remains unmarried. Thus, Margaret's experience exhibits how women were ". . . relegated to the ranks of abnormality if they did not marry . . . ," an ironic construction as ". . . singleness was in many ways a more attractive proposition than the married state" (Foster 7). Margaret's brief engagement makes this very clear.

Penny Dark, Margaret's would-be suitor, has different reasons but similar motivation for contemplating marriage after so many years as a bachelor. Like Margaret, Penny feels that marriage could provide him with some of the things he lacks in life, namely the comforts of a full-time home-maker. However, while Margaret sees marriage as a way to find love, in the form of a child, Penny views marriage as a necessary evil. Aunt Becky's levee and the promise of the jug spur his decision: "Pennycuik had decided that he must get married. . . . For years Penny had believed he would always remain a bachelor. In his youth he had rather prided himself on being a bit of a lady-killer. He had then every intention of being married sometime. But -- somehow -- while he was making up his mind the lady always got engaged to somebody else" (*TW* 164). Penny's procrastination is indicative of his lack of interest.

Even from the beginning his distaste for the institution of marriage and his lack of respect for women are obvious. Penny characterizes marriage as a kind of punishment: "He compared his lot complacently with most of the married men he knew. He wouldn't, he vowed, take any of their wives as a gift" (*TW* 165). Nevertheless, practical -- and selfish -- concerns win out. Penny finds that ". . . a doubt of his wisdom in remaining unmarried crept into his mind. Aunt Ruth was growing old and , with her heart, might drop off any time. What in thunder would he do for a housekeeper then?" (*TW* 165). Thus, Penny resigns himself to matrimony: ". . . with a long sigh of regret for the carefree and light-hearted existence he was giving up, made up his mind that he

would marry if it killed him" (*TW* 166).

However, this decision leaves Penny with a decided problem. Whom shall he choose as his bride? Penny's contemplation of the subject is simultaneously amusing and disturbing:

> This was no easy matter. It should have been easier than it had been thirty years before. There was not such a wide range of choice. . . . But which of the old maids and widows should be Mrs. Penny Dark? For old maid or widow it must be, Penny decided with another sigh. Penny was not quite the fool, in spite of his juvenile pretences, and he knew quite well no young girl would look at him. He had not, he said cynically, enough money for *that*. He balanced the abstract allurements of old maids and widow. Somehow, an old maid did not appeal to him. He hated the thought of marrying a woman no other man had ever wanted. But then -- a widow! Too experienced in managing men. Better a grateful spinster who would always bear in mind what he had rescued her from. (*TW* 166)

Certainly Penny's thoughts here reveal his conceit and his lack of higher emotions. However, it also becomes obvious that Penny regards women as a commodity. Since he really wants a housekeeper, not a wife, one woman is as good as the next. All that concerns Penny is that the woman he chooses should dutifully remain in an appropriately subordinate position.

Penny's cold catalogue of his possible choices demonstrates both his misogynistic tendencies and his inability to perceive that there are two parties' feelings to be considered in this arrangement. His greatest concern is for appearances. First Penny determines that he cannot marry "an ugly woman" (*TW* 167), but revises his position and decides that ". . . he could do without beauty and style but charm he must have" (*TW* 167). Nevertheless, the woman he

chooses must have some attractive qualities. He muses that "[i]t was all very well to say all women were sisters under their skins . . . but the skin made a difference, confound it" (*TW* 168). But of primary consideration to Penny is the assurance of acceptance. He ". . . did not mean to run any risk of a refusal" (*TW* 167). Penny is determined to preserve his illusion that he is a wonderful catch for some lucky woman.

After what he perceives as considerable consideration -- an entire church service -- Penny settles on Margaret as the woman privileged to receive his attentions. After all, ". . . Margaret was ladylike and gentle and would of course give up writing her silly poems when she had a husband" (*TW* 168-69). However, right from the moment he makes his decision, Penny expresses his sense of entrapment. He describes himself as "already roped in and fettered" (*TW* 169)

Consequently, there is nothing remotely romantic about Penny's proposal of marriage. To begin with, Penny finds he must force himself to do the deed: ". . . every evening he found an excuse to defer it. He might never have gone at all had it not been for the gravy stains on the tablecloth. Penny, who was as neat as one of his own cats, could not endure a mussy tablecloth. Old Aunt Ruth was getting inexcusably careless. It was high time the house had a proper mistress" (*TW* 184). Significantly, Penny's motives are both domestic and selfish. Affection and respect do not enter into this equation. Furthermore, there is no mention of Margaret herself in his resolution to propose.

Yet, Penny cannot understand why Margaret is not overwhelmingly eager to agree to marriage: "The amazing, the ununderstandable thing was that Margaret did not jump at him. When she had finally disentangled his meaning . . . she asked rather primly for time to consider it. This flabbergasted Penny. He who had not had the least doubt that he would go home an

engaged man, found himself going home nothing of the sort. He was so indignant that he wished he had never mentioned the matter to her" (*TW* 184-85). Her feelings are not a concern for him. All Penny is concerned for his own overweening pride. As Margaret is an object of pity within the clan, Penny perceives that he is doing her an honour by offering marriage.

While Margaret secretly wants a husband, she cannot reconcile herself to accepting just any man. She reflects that "[i]n spite of her desire for marriage in the abstract she found that in the concrete, as represented by little dapper Penny Dark, it was not wholly desirable. It would have amazed Penny, who had no small opinion of his own good looks, had he known that Margaret thought his bodily presence contemptible and his chubby pimply little face positively ugly -- and worse than ugly, rather ridiculous. To wake up every morning and see that face beside you" (*TW* 185). This on its own is almost too much to contemplate.

Margaret also recognizes that marriage to Penny, while it might have social advantages -- "She would be a wedded wife with a home and social standing such as she had never possessed" (*TW* 185) -- would entail the death of her two most cherished dreams. She would not be able to have Whispering Winds, and Penny's house was not even a close second in her eyes. Frankly, Margaret ". . . didn't like his fussy, lace-trimmed house. Too many jigarees on it. So different from little gray Whispering Winds, veiled in trees. Margaret felt positive anguish when she realised that marriage meant the surrender of all the mystery and music and magic that was Whispering Winds. . . . She could never again nourish a dear, absurd little hope that it might sometime be hers" (*TW* 185). And furthermore, Margaret would be forced to accept her childlessness. Marriage to Penny would not include children: ". . . he would never consent to her adopting a baby. He detested children" (*TW* 185). It is obvious that Margaret would be even

more lonely and isolated if married to Penny than she already was as an 'old maid.'

Furthermore, Margaret would have to abandon her sexual fantasies. She reflects: "And she must give up certain imaginary love affairs with imaginary lovers, such as she had been fond of dreaming. She felt that it would be wrong, when she was married, to dream those romantic love-affairs. She must 'keep her only' to Penny then" (*TW* 185). Not only does she recognize that she and Penny would not be physically compatible, Margaret feels that she must also deny herself other forms of sexual fulfillment if she is to be a proper wife. Her reasons for refusing continue to multiply.

In the end, Margaret rationalizes her acceptance of Penny's proposal. The promise of social recognition wins out: "Margaret reminded herself very sensibly that she could not expect to have a man made for her. She knew most of the clan would think she was in luck to get Penny. . . . She just couldn't make up her mind to marry Penny, somehow. Finally she remembered that she would certainly have no chance of Aunt Becky's jug if she stayed an old maid" (*TW* 186). Thus, while Margaret recognizes her potential entrapment, she hopes for other forms of fulfillment.

Nevertheless, neither party can conjure up much enthusiasm for the prospect of matrimony. Right from the time he receives Margaret's letter of acceptance, Penny drags his heels:

> He went up to see Margaret, trying to feel that it was the happiest day of his life. He thought it his duty to kiss her and he did. Neither enjoyed it.
>
> T'spose there isn't any particular hurry about getting married,' he said. 'It's a cold time of year. Better wait till spring.'
>
> Margaret agreed almost too willingly. (*TW* 186)

Margaret shares his unease. Both are eager to accept any reason for delay. Their lack of enthusiasm and their physical dislike for each other decide the matter. So, the procrastination continues. Seasonal concerns and repairs to the house provide further excuses.

Penny is convinced that this arrangement has made him the object of ridicule. The engagement has increased Margaret's status, but Penny is afraid that it has done the opposite for him: "Margaret suddenly found herself of considerable importance. Penny was well-off; she was doing well for herself. She rather enjoyed this in a shy way but Penny writhed when people congratulated him. He thought they had their tongues in their cheeks" (*TW* 187). This, however, is only a symptom of his growing sense of entrapment. The prospect of change both annoys and terrifies him: "He didn't want to break up his old habits -- his comfortable ways of life. As for Aunt Ruth, certainly she had her faults. But he was used to them; it would be easier to put up with them than to get used to Margaret's new virtues" (*TW* 203). In fact, through the character of Penny, Montgomery can succinctly, though humorously, explore the idea of marriage as bondage. Penny feels seriously constrained: "He began to have horrible nightmares, in which he really found himself married -- sewed up fast and hopelessly. It was an infernal sensation. He began to lose weight and a hunted look came into his eyes" (*TW* 203). Penny's decided revulsion for marriage to Margaret makes her sacrifice of herself all the more striking.

She is trapped by her promise and yearns for her independence. Margaret's desire to ride on the carousel is thus symbolic of her desire for personal freedom. Watching the children on their ride, Margaret contemplates how she ". . . had hankered all her life for a ride on the merry-go-round. There was something about it that fascinated her. She thought it would be delightful to mount one of those gay little horses and spin madly round and round. But she had never really

thought of doing it. It was only an impossible dream" (*TW* 204). Like so many things in Margaret's life, the circus ride is a pleasure she longs for but is one denied her by social convention.

Seeing little Brian Dark look longingly at the pretty horses, Margaret offers to pay for his ride. By sponsoring him, perhaps she can experience vicariously his youthful freedom. However, the unwanted and unloved child does not know freedom either, and is afraid to try it alone. Knowing that Brian needs her support, Margaret finds the impetus to take her first steps back toward freedom: "Margaret could never quite understand and explain just what did come over her. The inhibitions of years fell away" (*TW* 204).

On the circus ride, Margaret realizes a joy and a freedom from convention which she had never experienced. Penny describes her ". . . spinning furiously about on the merry-go-round -- up and down -- round and round -- riding for dear life and *riding astride*. Her hat had fallen off and her loosened hair blew wildly round her face. . . . She was having the time of her life -- she was -- why, she was drunk or exactly like it. . . . Her eyes were shining, her face was flushed. When the ride was ended Margaret wouldn't get off. . . . At the end of the third [ride] her sense returned to her and she got off dazedly" (*TW* 204-05). In her abandon, Margaret discovers the simple physical, sensual pleasures which have always been forbidden her. Having taken her first step toward freedom, there is no turning back for Margaret. If she felt ashamed for her actions, as Penny asserts she should, the emotion does not last long. She defends her actions when her sister-in-law takes her to task: "They had an actual fight over it. Margaret was by no means as unassertive as she used to be. Sometimes she spoke her mind with astonishing vim" (*TW* 205). Margaret is beginning to take control of her life and her destiny.

As a result, Margaret seriously questions the wisdom of her decision to marry Penny. It becomes apparent to her that the restrictions marriage will impose outweigh any advantages: "There were times when Margaret, in spite of her trousseau dresses and silk stockings, and the glamour of being Mrs., almost wished she had never promised to marry Penny -- times when she wondered if it were not possible somehow to escape marrying him. She always concluded rather sadly that it wasn't. Nobody would believe anything but that Penny had thrown her over and Margaret couldn't face *that*" (*TW* 205). Margaret is aware of her entrapment, but her sense of honour and her pride are strong motivators for her to keep her word.

Penny has no such compunctions. He wants out of the marriage, and determines to find a way. His only stipulation is that Margaret must be the one to bow out. Penny wants no stain on his reputation, but he has no concern for hers. After all, in Penny's mind her actions at the fair revealed that she had no sense of propriety. So, Penny plans to force her hand: "The whole clan would cry shame on him if he threw Margaret over. . . . If only he could induce Margaret to throw *him* over. Ah, there was an idea now. . . . Penny had what he considered a veritable inspiration. . . . He would get drunk and go drunk to the church garden party at Bay Silver. Margaret would be so disgusted that she would turn him down. He knew her strict temperance principles" (*TW* 206). He intends to take advantage of the very virtues which prevent Margaret from breaking the engagement.

Ironically, Penny's plan backfires on him, and instead of forcing Margaret into rejecting him, his unaccustomed inebriation results in sudden infatuation: ". . . Penny was more or less lit up, but he was not actually drunk. He had only got as far as the sentimental stage when it was suddenly revealed to him that he was really desperately in love with Margaret. By gad, she was a

fine little woman -- and he was mad about her. He would go and tell her so. Had he ever thought of jilting her? Never! He hunted out some cloves and set out for Bay Silver, the ardent lover at last" (*TW* 207). Penny woos Margaret like a true suitor, making her distinctly uncomfortable. She reflects, "Really, this love-making which was so attractive in fancy, was nothing more or less than dreadful in reality" (*TW* 208). Nevertheless, his solicitousness convinces Margaret that she must stay true to him. This is a frightening prospect in light of the fact that "[s]he loathed the sparkle of Penny's ring on her hand. It was a diamond . . . and Margaret had once thought it would be a wonderful thing to have a diamond engagement-ring. But now it was only a fetter" (*TW* 207). Here Margaret verbalizes her conviction that marriage is bondage.

Penny feels exactly the same way, once the effects of the liquor have worn off, and he determines that there must be some way to worm his way out of the situation: "In truth, as the fatal time drew near, Penny grew absolutely desperate. At first he thought he would ask Margaret to postpone the wedding again -- until after the puzzle of the jug was solved. That would not affect his chances materially. Then Penny threw up his head. That would be dishonourable. He would break the engagement before, if break it he must. Ay, that would be nobler" (*TW* 231). He excuses his actions by claiming to be honourable, but it is clear that this is only a mask for his selfishness. Penny lacks the virtue to be honest.

However, despite Penny's determination to be in control of the affair, Margaret takes charge of their final reckoning. As Penny talks around the issue, Margaret bluntly asks, "'Don't you want to marry me?'" (*TW* 232). When he admits that he does not, she sighs, "'Oh, I'm so thankful -- so thankful'" (*TW* 232). Margaret is overwhelmed by the reprieve she has been granted. Finally she can extricate herself from the situation without abandoning her honour. She

reveals: "Oh, Penny, I didn't want to marry you either. I was only going through with it because I didn't want to disappoint you. You don't know how happy it makes me to find out that you don't care" (*TW* 232).

Penny is outraged and insulted, and disgruntled that he has been robbed of his one opportunity to play the lady-killer. He responds spitefully, "I only asked you out of pity, anyhow, Mar'gret" (*TW* 232). As always, Penny has to make himself seem significant at the expense of another's feelings, but Margaret remains unaffected. Her new-found assurance and freedom allow her to put him in his place. She rebukes him: "That isn't a sporting thing to say. . . . Here is your ring -- and I've something very important to attend to this evening" (*TW* 232-33). In her parting words, Margaret has made it clear that she will not be subordinate to any man. Not only does she imply that Penny has no honour; she reinforces the fact that the breaking of their engagement is not the most significant event of her day. Penny has finally and decisively been put in his place.

Released from her promise of marriage, Margaret's cherished dreams are restored. She reflects that she ". . . felt curiously young again, as if life had suddenly folded back for thirty years. She slipped away in the September moonlight to visit Whispering Winds. It would be hers -- dear friendly Whispering Winds. . . . She would be alone with her dreams. She could cry and laugh and -- and -- *swear* when she wanted to. And she would adopt a baby. A baby with dimples and sweet, perfumed creases and blue eyes and golden curls. There must be such a baby somewhere, just waiting to be cuddled" (*TW* 233). This time, Margaret's dreams are more than fantasy: they are on their way to becoming reality.

The sale of the copy of *Pilgrim's Progress* which Aunt Becky had left her -- which Penny had advised her not to sell -- provided her with a windfall of ten thousand dollars. Aunt Becky

left Margaret a legacy which far exceeded the treasured jug; she granted Margaret economic independence. Because Margaret was financially secure, she could take control of her own life, and make her dreams into reality. She could be her own active agent in life, without having to depend upon a man to provide for her. In other words, Margaret was free.

One final twist of fate brings Margaret the love that she yearns for. Little Brian Dark is devastated upon discovering that his guardian has killed the stray cat which he felt was the only creature on earth who loved him. In his despair, "[b]y some blind instinct rather than design, his feet bore him to the Rose River graveyard and his mother's neglected grave. He cast himself down upon it, sobbing terribly" (*TW* 241). Here he is discovered by Margaret. Concerned for him, Margaret "touched him gently" (*TW* 241) and asked him what the trouble was. Brian finds himself responding as ". . . Margaret's soft grey-blue eyes were so tender and pitiful" (*TW* 242).

And "[i]n those few moments the dream of the golden-haired baby vanished forever from her heart" (*TW* 242). Margaret no longer needs this dream as she has found its embodiment in reality. She asks him: "'Brian, would you like to come and live with me --down at Whispering Winds? I'm moving there next week. You will be *my* little boy -- and I will love you -- I loved your mother, dear, when we were girls together'" (*TW* 242).

Never having had anyone attest to his worth, Brian fears that Margaret will be disappointed in him and will think him the wicked little boy his aunt and uncle have always told him he is. To this, Margaret responds, "'We'll both be bad and wicked together then, Brian'" (*TW* 242). By making themselves into a family, Margaret and Brian can rise above convention and forge a new life which celebrates love and freedom. Society might see this subversion of the order of things as wicked, but Montgomery assures her reader that it embodies only the best

romantic virtues of respect, freedom and friendly love.

The conclusion of Margaret's story is romantic and positive in a way which none of Montgomery's other heroines experience. There are assurances of love and understanding in the final lines of their story: "They were both suddenly very happy. They knew they belonged to each other. Brian fell asleep that night with tears on his lashes for poor Cricket but with a warm feeling of being lapped round with love -- such as he had never known before. Margaret lay blissfully awake. Whispering Winds was hers and a little lonely creature to love and cherish. She asked for nothing more -- not even for Aunt Becky's jug" (*TW* 243). As Elizabeth Epperly asserts, "No other Montgomery novel heroine escapes conventional romance with such success" (246). In the story of Margaret, Montgomery has successfully ". . . negotiat[ed] and articulat[ed] a female self that, at least temporarily, writes herself *out of* patriarchal enclosure" (Yeast *Articulating* 136).

Rachel DuPlessis asserts that in a romance "[s]oon after she accepts the man in the love plot, the female hero becomes a heroine, and the story ends" (8). Certainly, this is not the case for Margaret. She does not accept the man, and the love plot in the novel revolves around home and family, not sexual or romantic attraction. Thus, Margaret remains a female hero, in control of her own destiny. The reader is comforted by the sense that her story will continue in a life of happy motherhood and free domesticity.

Asked once about the difference between modern girls and the girls of her own day, Montgomery responded: "I said I thought the present day girl exactly like the girl of yesterday -- the only difference being that the girls of today *did* what we of yesterday *wanted* to" (*Journals* 3.208). There is a sense in Margaret's story that she has succeeded in living the life which

Montgomery ultimately wanted for herself -- a home and children combined with independence and self-determination.

Conclusion:
Writing Out the Demon

Rachel DuPlessis maintains that romance, as a narrative pattern, ". . . muffles the main female character, represses quest . . . [and] incorporates individuals within couples as a sign of their personal and narrative success" (5). As such, it is a literary representation of the sex-gender system itself. On one level, this is true of the five novels selected for this study. However, if we consider Judith Miller's suggestion that women's writing is "put together out of pieces . . . placed in careful relation to one another" (158), where "the spaces between the fragments -- the silences" (158) are equally important, we can view Montgomery's use of romance in a new light. The identity of her fiction as romance is significant; however, her manipulation of its conventions to fit her own purposes is similarly meaningful.

What Montgomery attempts in her fiction is to reconcile what she recognizes as the opposing rôles of women: woman as a social construction and woman as a self-determining individual. In all five of the novels, the heroine's involvement in traditional rôles enables Montgomery to question those rôles. Each woman's story depicts her challenge of social convention, and four of the five stories reveal how she conforms to gender expectations in marriage. The fact that the heroine conforms at the end of the novel is not merely a concession to literary convention; it is a reflection of many women's reality. And, as Laurence Lerner points out, ". . . this is the way radical sentiments normally appear in fiction -- in contest with orthodoxy and often, in terms of plot, defeated by it. What matters is not simply which side the author comes down on, but [her] ability to express for us the full human meaning of a new point of view" (176). Thus, in her very act of questioning gender-determined roles, Montgomery has taken an

important step toward feminine self-definition.

It is in the conflict between the development of the plot and the often sudden resolution in marriage that Montgomery's novels are the most subversive. But, as DuPlessis suggests, "[n]arrative outcome is one place where transindividual assumptions and values are most clearly visible, and where the word 'convention' is found resonating between its literary and social meanings. . . . Any resolution can have traces of the conflicting materials that have been processed within it. It is where subtexts and repressed discourses can throw up one last flare of meaning . . ." (3). Certainly, this is true of Montgomery's narratives.

In the resolution of the novel, the young woman may assent to marriage, but Montgomery subtly suggests the consequences of her acquiescence. Using the format of the novel of development, and demonstrating how the process of growth is inverted in women's experience, Montgomery reveals the irony of the rigid gender codes which define that experience. The woman's subordination to her lover at the end of the novel reveals how marriage can not only entrap but also infantilize women. The tension between the quest plot of the novel and the resolution of the romance is tangible, and this intensifies the reader's recognition of the heroine's loss of power.

This is not to presume that Montgomery necessarily meant to be prescriptive in her novels; rather, she had something she felt she had to express -- for her own purposes. In a letter to Mr. MacMillan, she writes: "I cannot think that everyone ought to write with only a 'didactic or elevating purpose' in view. In fact, I question if *anyone* should or if any good is gained by so doing. I think we should just write out what is in us -- what our own particular 'demon' gives us -- and the rest is on the knees of the gods. If we write truly out of our own heart and experience

that truth will find and reach its own" (*My Dear* 21). Thus, where Montgomery felt silenced by patriarchal authority and gender-determined destiny, the novels provided her with an opportunity to consider these structures and their effect upon herself and other women.

As Denyse Yeast suggests, "[t]he constraints on women in Montgomery's society as well as the limited range of expression available to a woman writer forced her to encode rather than make explicit any ideological subversion within the public writing" (Yeast *Articulating* 22). Thus, Montgomery's subversive message is available to those who wish to search it out, but does not negate the romantic resolution for those who wish to believe in it. She does not categorically reject the value of romantic love. However, in her conventional conclusions she does suggest that "[t]he rules laid down in novels won't work our in real existence" (*My Dear* 30).

Gabriella Ahmansson notes that ". . . there are no available models for [Montgomery] to adopt except those that are suggested by that world" (*A Life* 113-14), so these are the models, the life-scripts, which Montgomery must use in her fiction. If the 'real' woman's only acceptable resolution was in marriage, then marriage was also the logical conclusion for her heroines. This is not to suggest that the female protagonist has no power; rather, when "[t]he female hero turns herself into a heroine; this is her last act as an individual agent. . . . For although female narrative life will be structured by marriage, female power is, for a while, expressed in courtship" (DuPlessis 14). So, while the conventions of romance determine that the heroine's power must eventually come to an end, Montgomery prolongs her triumph for as long as the narrative will allow, thus attesting to the value of feminine experience. And, in the story of Margaret in *A Tangled Web*, Montgomery takes this one step further to suggest that, given the right circumstances, women can find a way to negotiate their way around the barriers to fulfillment

constructed by the patriarchy and thus determine their own destinies.

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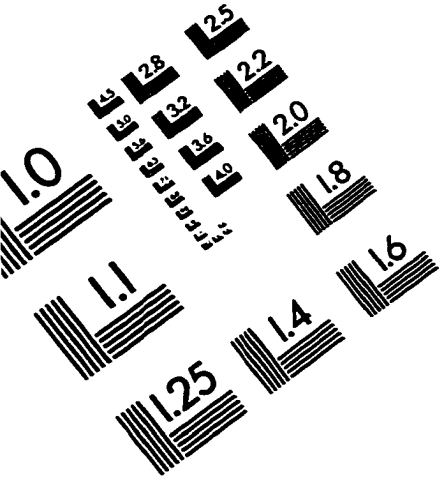

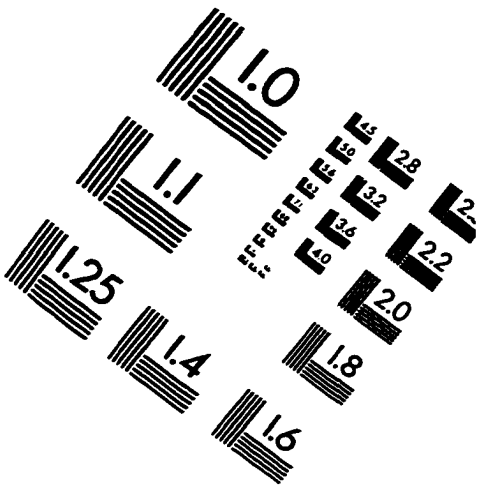

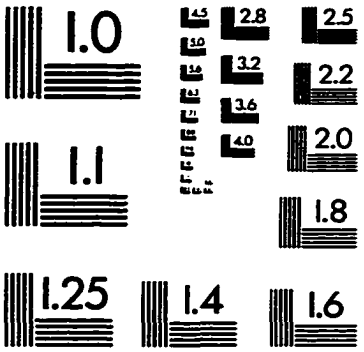

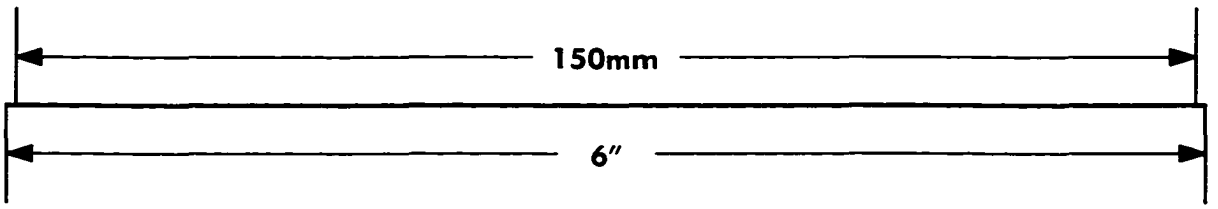

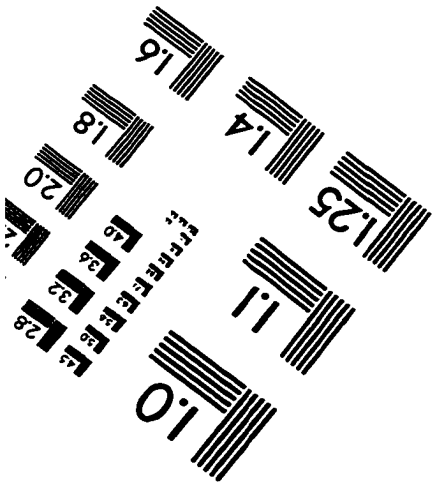

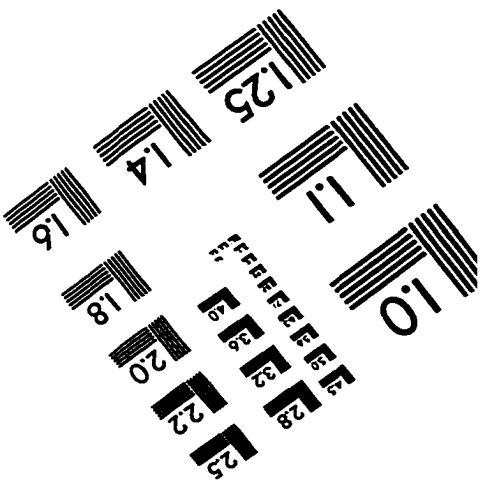

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