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The Quest of the Female Hero in the Works of Patricia A. McKillip

by

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Abstract

The path followed by the questing hero of myth, fiction, and film has been the subject of several analyses, one of which is the monomyth described by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Feminist critics, concerned by gender imbalances in Campbell's monomyth, have produced other versions of the monomyth, concluding that except in a few instances, the female hero's quest for an identity that includes both a sense of self and a loving relationship is doomed to failure. This is not true of the quest fantasies written by American fantasist Patricia A. McKillip, which can be better described using the structure of the duomyth rather than the monomyth. In the duomyth, the focus is on both a male and female hero, who shift between actantial roles rather than being confined to a single role, thus allowing for a resolution free from gender inequality.

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This work is dedicated with love and respect to the memory of my mother, Doreen Ouellette Mains, a lifelong student and caring teacher, who was brave enough to encourage me to follow a different road than she had taken, understanding enough to support me when I made the same mistakes that she had, and responsible enough to know that daughters need to choose for themselves. No female hero could ever have a better mentor.

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Chapter 1 - Ringing the Changes on the Hero's Quest

The great fantasies, myths, and tales are indeed like dreams: they speak *from* the unconscious *to* the unconscious, in the *language* of the unconscious — symbol and archetype. (Le Guin 52)

Two of the most common themes explored in the narrative worlds of fiction, film, and television are the hero's quest for identity and the search for love. The difficulty in successfully achieving both of these goals is the central concern of many works written by women and featuring female protagonists, as is revealed by an examination of much of the critical analysis dealing with the female hero. In criticism, in fiction, and in real life, it seems almost impossible for the woman to enter into a romantic bond with a man without taking on a submissive role in a relationship founded on hierarchies of power rather than on equality and balance. After an exhaustive exploration of hundreds of texts, two noted feminist critics conclude that "even when male and female characters love each other with the same commitment and intensity, there is an inherent imbalance of power in the relationship" (Pearson and Pope 34). And yet these same critics acknowledge that their overwhelmingly negative conclusion is not necessarily true in the case of the female hero of fantastic fiction. A more positive outlook for the female hero is revealed in the type of work that could be considered the exemplar of the quest for knowledge, the quest fantasy.

The quest fantasy is, by the simplest definition, a narrative work belonging to the genre of fantasy and fashioned out of the concerns and structure of the quest for identity. The quest fantasy has always been marked by the concern for both knowing and being.

The question “Who am I?” central to the quest contains both the sense of “knowing,” of seeking an answer that will add to a store of knowledge, and the sense of “being” as indicated by the verb “am,” the first-person singular form of the verb “to be,” which is concerned with matters of existence, with a state of being in the world. The questing hero seeking an answer to the question “Who am I?” desires knowledge of an identity, to know and to understand his or her self and that self’s place in the larger world.

The quest for identity has both a private and a public component. The hero must develop a private sense of selfhood, an inner sense of a unique and whole self mature enough to take responsibility for making choices that honestly reflect that self. “Whole” means a self resulting from the Jungian process of individuation, of integration of the different aspects of personality resident in the psyche (Le Guin 53-4). This self transcends gender, integrating both masculine and feminine qualities. Besides this, the whole self accepts the darker shadow of the repressed animal urges hidden deep in the psyche: “all we don’t want to, can’t, admit into our conscious self, all the qualities and tendencies within us which have been repressed, denied, or not used” (Le Guin 55). Each hero has the potential to develop an authentic, integrated self, a sense of power-within, the power that comes from understanding one’s unique talents and abilities. Only with the acceptance of all aspects of the psyche and the development of a sense of personal power can the hero become a fully mature individual capable of making choices and taking responsibility for the consequences of those choices. For the female hero, socially conditioned to submit to patriarchal authority and encouraged to be dependent, the freedom to make choices arising from a fully mature sense of selfhood may seem an

impossible dream.

But, as Ursula Le Guin points out in her explanation of Jung's theories of individuation or the development of identity, it is not enough to realize the private self. It is also important to make connections with the larger world outside of the inner self, to make a place for the self in the community in terms of work to be performed. The hero's quest for identity is not complete until he or she has found a way to use the power-within in service to the community. There must be some meaningful work to be accomplished, to give the self a sense of purpose. The tasks to be performed or obstacles to be overcome that are common features of the quest structure are related to the hero's growing understanding of this meaningful work. The need to define a public role, to find meaningful work within the community, may prove a difficult task on its own for the female hero to achieve. Limited for so many generations to the private sphere of domestic life, and trained to sacrifice all sense of self in service to others, the female hero must learn to integrate private and public, to be both selfish and selfless by turn.

Additionally, people define themselves in relation to a larger world by identifying their connections to others, including family and friends but most especially, at least in contemporary culture, to one special other with whom they consider themselves to be in love. Gaining an understanding of the right and wrong ways to treat others is also a feature of the quest structure, as the hero meets secondary characters during the journey, characters who play the roles of parents, siblings, friends, and potential partners. Quest fantasies, whether about a male or a female hero, either end in or at least include as a stage the union with another character in a sexual or romantic relationship, most often

with one of the opposite gender. This union can be understood symbolically as an integration of personality characteristics; that is, the male hero cannot be considered whole and mature until he understands his feminine side, just as the female hero must assimilate the masculine side of her personality, marked by socially masculine traits such as aggressiveness, in order to become empowered as a mature self.¹ Often, for the female hero, the search for love as an important element of the quest for identity is more prominent than it seems to be for the male hero, and, because of the ways in which concepts of romantic love and the soulmate have been used to make women complicit in their own oppression,² this element of the quest can become problematic for the female hero, whose “quest for a relationship in which a hero can achieve equity, authenticity, and Eros” (Pratt 44) often seems impossible. Sometimes those female heroes who achieve part of the quest for identity, who are able to develop their sense of self and to find meaningful work, are unable to express that complete self in the context of a relationship with a lover or husband, sometimes choosing and other times forced to either submit to the lesser role in a relationship based on hierarchy, or avoid relationships altogether.

Now that the element of “quest” has been identified, it is time to explore the other,

¹ I am following Charlotte Spivack’s distinction between “male” and “masculine” and “female” and “feminine”: “the terms ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ refer[] to cultural constructs and psychic components, not to biological men and women” (x). The confusion between the cultural and the biological complicates the relation of terms within binary oppositions so that male and female become associated in common usage with whatever is designated masculine and feminine.

² This is a recurring theme in Ti-Grace Atkinson’s *Amazon Odyssey* and is stated explicitly in the chapter titled “Radical Feminism and Love.” Romantic love as an oppressive force and, transformed, as an ideal, is also the subject of the chapters “Love” and “The Culture of Romance” in Shulamith Firestone’s *The Dialectic of Sex*.

more problematic, half of the definition of quest fantasy. The word “fantasy” is commonly used to refer to a specific genre of fiction. The types of books marketed as “fantasy” in the bookstores include a wide range of narrative worlds: science fantasy, which makes use of technology as a form of magic; sword-and-sorcery, often featuring barbarian or chivalric warriors fighting with or against magic-wielding wizards and sorcerers; the newer urban fantasy, in which the long-suppressed forces of magic intrude upon the everyday world as elves and other magical creatures interact with the homeless and struggling rock musicians; high or epic fantasy, generally featuring a large cast of princes, wizards, elves, and gods and dealing with the conventional formula of good triumphing over evil; fairy tale fantasy, updated and expanded versions of old tales relegated to childhood, both folktales and the literary fairytale. And, of course, the genre includes quest fantasy, which describes works of fantasy in which the structure and force of the quest is predominant, and which conform to Stephen R. Donaldson’s definition of fantasy as “a form of fiction in which the internal crises or conflicts or processes of the characters are dramatized as if they were external individuals or events,” meaning that the hero’s quest for identity, although it is narrated as a journey through an external landscape populated by other characters, is also metaphorically an inner journey through a psychic landscape. So “fantasy,” like science fiction and horror, is a term used by authors and readers, booksellers and publishers, to refer to a specific marketing category of books that are other than mainstream fiction.

Kathryn Hume argues for a much broader interpretation of the term: “*Fantasy is any departure from consensus reality, an impulse native to literature and manifested in*

innumerable variations, from monster to metaphor” (21). In other words, she considers “fantasy” to refer to a method of narrative production rather than to be fixed to any specific category of works. Hume believes that

literature is the product of two impulses. These are *mimesis*, felt as the desire to imitate, to describe events, people, situations, and objects with such verisimilitude that others can share your experience; and *fantasy*, the desire to change givens and alter reality — out of boredom, play, vision, longing for something lacking [desire], or need for metaphoric images that will bypass the audience’s verbal defences. (20)

All works of literature, Hume argues, are the products of both impulses, although certain genres are more heavily influenced by one creative impulse than by the other. Works considered to be mainstream or realistic literature are the products of predominantly mimetic techniques, while texts considered to fall into the genre of fantasy, whether quest fantasy, sword-and-sorcery, urban fantasy, or fairy tales, are produced by authors who make more use of the fantasy impulse, and thus more use of narrative techniques of addition, subtraction, and contrast to transform, rather than to reflect, the materials gathered from observation of the sociocultural world. An author following the fantastic impulse adds magic, or its science fiction counterpart, advanced technology, or adds symbolic, mythic meaning to everyday objects; subtracts unpleasant truths or unwanted restrictions or limitations found in the world of consensus reality from the projected narrative world; contrasts the known with the unfamiliar, the strange, the desired by using common narrative tools such as the double. These are all techniques used in the creation

of works of quest fantasy, which term can now be more precisely defined as works produced using predominantly the impulse of fantasy and categorized as a subgenre of fantasy in which the concept of the quest for an identity integrating a sense of a unique self with meaningful work and relationships with others is explored following a widely recognized structural pattern.

The paradigmatic structural pattern of the hero's quest for identity is Joseph Campbell's monomyth,³ described in his work *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, in which he analyzes hundreds of myths, legends, and folk tales from around the world, and discerns at the structural level of such stories a similar pattern. In Campbell's monomyth, the hero departs from the community on a journey through a strange exterior landscape, mirroring the interior landscape of the subconscious. While on The Road of Trials, the hero undertakes many tasks, from battling dragons and other beasts to answering riddles and helping those in need, and encounters many obstacles during the threshold crossing into the unconscious world, symbolized often by the sea or the forest or more often by underground caves. In this world of the unconscious, the hero receives aid and advice from many helpers, particularly from a Wise Old Man who plays the role of mentor, providing advice and guidance. At the apex of the quest, the hero unites with a powerful figure of the opposite gender in the Sacred Marriage and reconciles with a parental figure (described by Campbell as Atonement or at-one-ment), after which the hero returns to the conscious world of the social community as a strong, mature individual, having integrated

³ For an overview of other structural analyses of the hero's quest in literature, myth, and ritual, see Robert Segal's introduction to *In Quest of the Hero*, a collection of works by Otto Rank, Lord Raglan, and Alan Dundes.

all aspects of the psychic self and become apotheosized as, in Campbell's term, Master of the Two Worlds.

The effort to summarize Campbell's monomyth in gender neutral terms is deliberate, as Campbell states that the hero can be either male or female (19). The roles played by other characters in the tale can be similarly inverted, so that the Wise Old Man becomes the Wise Old Woman, and the goddess of the Sacred Marriage becomes a god. Other aspects of Campbell's monomyth are not gender-dependent. Although the tales of the adventuring warrior hero include episodes involving violence and weapons,⁴ many of the tasks required of the successful hero are not so clearly related to the role of the warrior and can be accomplished by either gender. Riddles can be answered by anyone with knowledge, male or female, weak or strong. Occasionally, the task required of the hero is more usually assumed to be suited to a female rather than a male: domestic tasks, such as spinning straw into gold. Even the mighty Hercules had to clean out a stable, a task not generally considered heroic. However, for the most part Campbell's intent to make the structural pattern gender-neutral does not seem to be borne out in his practice. Most of the examples he draws on from world mythology are tales featuring male heroes. Also, he makes universal use of the masculine pronoun, using the feminine only when he narrates a very few examples of the female hero, such as Psyche in the tale told by Apuleius.

⁴ This comment is not intended as an acknowledgment that the role of the warrior hero cannot be fulfilled by a female. Aside from the more recent examples of female heroes who use strength, weapons, and violence to defeat their adversaries, such as television's *Xena the Warrior Princess* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, the literary female warrior has a long history, from Britomart to Jirel of Joiry.

Certainly many critics, including myself, have used Campbell's monomyth to gain useful insights into works of fiction, including quest fantasies in which the protagonist is female and the tale told from a female point of view. As noted earlier, it is possible to invert all of the gender roles of the monomyth, so that the hero becomes female, the mentor becomes a Wise Woman, the Sacred Marriage involves an encounter with the masculine principle, and the Atonement or reconciliation is with the Mother rather than the Father. And the stages of the monomyth that are not gender-inflected, the tasks to be done and the obstacles to be overcome, can be found in all hero tales, even when the tasks undertaken by the female hero reflect female experience not usually considered "heroic."

Carol Pearson and Katherine Pope, rather than simply using Campbell's monomyth with a few gender inversions, have developed a separate structural model of the female hero's quest that is nevertheless very similar to Campbell's monomyth in their comprehensive study of the female hero in western literature. Their names for the stages of the hero's quest differ tellingly from Campbell's, but the underlying structural patterns can still be discerned.

In their view, before the female hero's quest can begin, she must slay the dragons confining her within her patriarchal community. Campbell suggests that the dragon encounter represents the status quo that must be overcome or rejuvenated by the hero; Pearson and Pope identify several social conventions of the patriarchal society that must be slain by the female hero: "the myth of sex differences, the myth of virginity, the myth of romantic love, and the myth of maternal self-sacrifice" (18). The myth of sex differences tells the female hero that only men can accomplish the great works of the

world, while women are confined to the gentler domestic sphere, unable to perform the hero's tasks. The myth of virginity keeps her pure until marriage and ensures her husband's immortality in the continuation of his genes through her children. The myth of romantic love assures her that she will find true happiness in submission to a stronger, protecting man, while the myth of maternal self-sacrifice encourages her to find meaningful work only in service to others and never in the fulfillment of her own needs. If the female hero does not slay these dragons, does not begin to recognize that these myths serve to limit her sense of selfhood and the possibilities open to her in society, her quest will have ended prematurely.

The true quest begins with the female hero's Exit from the Garden, which is an analogue of Campbell's departure threshold crossing into the unconscious. However, the female hero's exit from the garden in which she has been confined often ends in tragedy, as it does for Richardson's *Clarissa*, Brontë's *Catherine*, and Chopin's *Edna* (Pearson and Pope 79), who find nowhere in their worlds to go once they have freed themselves from the restraints put upon them by society. As Pearson and Pope acknowledge, "[t]he exit does not by itself promise success, happiness, or love. What it does provide is independence, integrity, and self-respect" (83). In other words, the female hero cannot expect to have it all.

Having left the garden of the patriarchal enclosure, but still prey to the myth of romantic love, the female hero encounters the male figures of the seducer and the suitor, who awaken her to the possibilities of sexuality and love but who ultimately disappoint her expectations of a successful outcome to her quest for love. To successfully negotiate

this stage of the quest, the female hero must “slay the dragon of romantic love and demythologize the seducer” (68) who has performed a positive function in awakening her to a world of experience, thus helping her to free herself from the myth of virginity, but who does not make her happy or satisfy her quest for love.

Finally, the hero undergoes a stage in which A Hero is her Mother, an event similar to Campbell’s Atonement with the Father. The female hero who successfully negotiates the previous stages of her quest is now in a position to recognize that her quest has become “a search for her true, powerful female parent” (177). In this stage, she realizes that she no longer has to repudiate the nurturing maternal qualities which are denigrated in a patriarchal society and which she has rejected in order to escape the limitations of that society. In other words, she learns that she can provide service to others without having to neglect her own needs.

The end of the female hero’s quest, according to Pearson and Pope, depends much upon the society in which she undertakes her quest. Often, her quest ends tragically as she is forced into the stunted role afforded her in the patriarchy. If successful, her quest might end in her achievement of an isolated subculture of one, as she exists apart from her society. Occasionally, she is able to achieve The Kingdom Transfigured as her society changes as a result of her new knowledge; the examples provided by Pearson and Pope to illustrate this possibility are utopian texts — Gilman’s *Herland*, Russ’ *The Female Man* — which are generally considered to belong to the fantastic genre of science fiction.

Annis Pratt has taken a different approach. Rather than following or modifying Campbell’s monomyth, Pratt attempts her own analysis of archetypal patterns in fiction

written by women and featuring female characters. Pratt sees four basic archetypal patterns commonly discerned in these works, which for the most part follow a sequence paralleling the female hero's life experience. As a young girl, before becoming of use to the patriarchal system as a wife and mother, the female hero often experiences a close relationship with a green world, a solitary world marked by the natural, rather than the public and social world. Within this private green world, the female hero often forms a relationship with a green-world lover, usually a transitory figure who helps her to strengthen her relationship with nature. Eventually the young hero must leave this green world; often she is forcibly removed from the green world and initiated into the patriarchal public world through the rape-trauma, the second of Pratt's archetypal stages. According to Pratt, even the female hero's husband, even when chosen by the hero rather than chosen for her by another, can serve as the rapist figure. The hero's attempt to avoid marriage often leads to madness, as it does for Tina in Sue Kaufman's *Diary of a Mad Housewife*, or suicide. In marriage, the hero becomes trapped within the patriarchal enclosure, where her quest for identity ends in a recognition that her social identity as a wife and mother forecloses other possibilities. In a possible final stage, often taking place late in the hero's life, after she serves little useful purpose in the patriarchal system, the mature female hero may escape the enclosure and return to the green world, where she lives free and alone, an eccentric on the outside of society (170).

As with Pearson and Pope's model of the female hero's quest, Pratt sees the quest for love as a negative component of the larger quest for identity. The green-world lover is a transitory stage only, not capable of fulfilling the role of husband and life partner. The

rapist who forces the female into the public world cannot be seen as a positive figure, even though in many cases the hero may have felt a sense of attraction or even desire for him. And the husband, who may have seemed an “appropriate mate” at first, a possible soulmate, is revealed as the jailer keeping the hero locked within the patriarchal enclosure, and as such a source of disillusion and disappointment (47). Thus Pratt presents the quest for love in a negative light, as a source of pain rather than fulfillment.

Aside from attempts to invert the gender roles in Campbell’s pattern, and Pratt’s analysis of archetypal patterns unique to women’s fiction, another method for uncovering the structure of the female hero’s quest is the attempted recovery of a lost tradition of female-centred stories from a time before patriarchal revision. A search through myths, legends, and fairy tales recorded during times of the patriarchy reveals echoes of a lost past in remnants of tales about female power. Pratt notes three major sources of such tales: the grail legends incorporated into the Arthurian mythos; neopagan attempts to reinstate the Craft of the Wise; and myths such as those of Demeter and Kore (167). Of particular interest to feminist critics has been the quest-tale of Psyche and Cupid,⁵ related

⁵ Included as a tale told in Apuleius’ *The Golden Ass*, “Cupid and Psyche” tells of a maiden named Psyche, worshiped because of her great beauty. Venus, the goddess of love and beauty, becomes jealous and demands that she be sacrificed to a monster. An invisible force carries her away to an underground palace where she is treated as a queen and visited at night by her husband, whom she is forbidden to look upon. Because she is lonely, her husband allows her sisters to visit her; they persuade her that he is actually a monster waiting to devour her. They convince her to take a lit lamp to bed the following night; doing so, she learns that her husband is Cupid, the son of Venus. He is burned by the lamp oil and leaves her, angry that she has disobeyed his command not to look at him. Abandoned and pregnant, Psyche leaves her underground home to search for her husband. Eventually she accomplishes all of the tasks set for her by Venus and is reunited with her husband. She is made a goddess and ascends to live with Cupid on Mount Olympus, the home of the gods, where she gives birth to a daughter named Pleasure.

in Apuleius and echoed in fairy tales of the beast-bridegroom type, including “East of the Sun, West of the Moon,” “Beauty and the Beast,” the literary fairy tale “The Snow Queen” by Hans Christian Andersen, and the Scots ballad of Tam Lin, several versions of which are included in the collection of ballads by Francis James Child.

Psyche and her counterparts in other fairy tales and ballads are examples of a lost tradition of strong female quest heroes unfamiliar to a reading audience used to the stereotypical passive heroines such as Snow White and Sleeping Beauty, waiting to be rescued by their Princes Charming in tales first collected by male scholars such as Perreault and the Brothers Grimm, and popularized more recently by Disney animated movies. As fairy tale scholar Jack Zipes notes, “mass-marketed fairy tales of the twentieth century have undergone a sanitisation process according to the sexual preferences of males and the conservative norms of the dominant classes in America and England” (7). Zipes goes on to cite a study by Kay Stone which uncovers a folk tradition in which female characters are portrayed as “aggressive, active, clever, and adventurous. Unfortunately, these tales have been suppressed in literature and the mass media” (7). In his introduction to a collection of feminist fairy tales and critical essays on the subject, Zipes argues that fairy tales have been used to reflect societal concerns about acceptable role models, their elements changed during a process of historical evolution, and that it should be possible to transform the tales yet again to reflect a different conception of social roles and relationships between men and women. This is precisely the aim of critics Lee Edwards and Dana Heller in their use of the Psyche tale to analyze fiction featuring female heroes.

Neither Heller nor Edwards examines the Psyche tale at a structural level. They are interested more in reclaiming the possibility of heroism for female characters, distinguishing between the heroine who passively waits to be rescued by the male hero, and the female hero, who actively attempts to change her life and the world around her. Both are concerned with adding the term “hero” to the list of archetypal/stereotypical literary roles allowed to female characters: angel, sacrificing mother, hag, witch, chaste virgin (Edwards 14). Edwards and Heller tend to focus on the surface details rather than on the underlying structural pattern, although such a pattern can still be traced in these tales. Aside from the tasks to be completed, which are similar to Campbell’s Road of Trials and are analogous to the tasks performed by all heroes in all tales, the elements of the Psyche-structure can be found in many fairy tales featuring strong female heroes. First, there is the mother figure, who controls in many ways the actions of the hero, acting as a catalyst and setting the tasks. In the myth of Psyche, that figure is Venus; in Tam Lin, the Faerie Queen; in Andersen, the Snow Queen. Second is the inversion in gender roles of the object of value; rather than a male hero rescuing a passive damsel in distress, a female hero must rescue a passive male who can do little to help himself. Cupid is slightly wounded by the lamp oil, and more importantly is confined by his mother; Tam Lin can do nothing more than impregnate Janet and tell her his tale, hoping that she will come through for him; little Kay sits in the Snow Queen’s palace of ice, vainly trying to put together a puzzle of ice pieces. It seems that the traditional roles are reversed in these fairy tales, that if the female character is strong and adventurous, the male character is weak and helpless. Finally, the setting of the tale is divided into two worlds: the mortal

world and Mount Olympus, in Psyche's tale, the realm of Faerie, in Tam Lin, or the wintry domain of the Snow Queen. This structural division is echoed in Edwards' organizing of her work into two general categories: the cave of Amor, or the patriarchal enclosure, and Olympus, the lofty heights of the immortals which can be reached by the female hero if her quest is successful.

So, there are several versions of the hero's quest: Campbell's pattern, Pearson and Pope's gender inversion of Campbell, Pratt's archetypal split between green world and patriarchal enclosure, and the Psyche-structure underlying attempts by Edwards and Heller to use the tale of Psyche to reclaim the role of hero for the female character. In all cases, the analyses reveal a disjunction between the ideal outcome of the female hero's quest and the actual experience of the female hero as recounted in the many examples from literature used by these critics to illustrate their structures. Pearson and Pope believe that on the "archetypal level the journey to self-discovery is the same for both the male and female hero [. . . but] it differs in important particulars because of the roles and opportunities afforded each sex in western society" (viii). Pratt makes a similar point when she says that the "androgyny result[ing] from the negation of gender stereotypes, the absorption of positive qualities of 'masculinity' and 'femininity' into the total personality, and thus the development of a selfhood beyond gender dichotomies" is of benefit to both male and female (57-8). The successful achievement of the quest is an understanding of a self that transcends gender difference, that, in Edwards' terms, "denies the link between heroism and *either* gender *or* behavior" (5). All of the critics agree that the quest of the female hero can end in such an accomplishment.

Yet in the mass of examples provided by these critics, very few of the female heroes' quests end successfully: Maggie in Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* drowns along with the brother who tried to make her conform to society's expectations for a woman (Pratt 76); Rennie Morgan, in John Barth's *The End of the Road*, dies during an illegal abortion, after being manipulated by both her husband and his best friend with whom she has had an affair (Pearson and Pope 171); Molly, the young female hero of Jean Stafford's *The Mountain Lion* (Heller); "Clarissa and Hester[,] Emma, Jane, and Dorothea[,] Edna, Sue, and Isabel" (Edwards 150): all are female heroes whose quests end in tragedy or despair. The critics' overall conclusion is that the quest of the female hero often *must* end tragically. Heller claims that an "established feature of many of these female quests is the thwarted or impossible journey, a rude awakening to limits, and a reconciliation to society's expectations of female passivity" (14). Annis Pratt says that female writers "create narratives manifesting an acute tension between what any normal human being might desire and what a woman must become" and that for the female reader, "[o]ur quests for being are thwarted on every side by what we are told to be and to do, which is different from what men are told to be and to do: 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" (6).

If the female hero's quest for identity as a mature member of the community is difficult to achieve, her quest for a love that does not require the denial of selfhood is nearly impossible. For Pearson and Pope, one of the dragons that must be, and often is not, slain by the female hero is the myth of romantic love, which "is held out to women as

their version of the heroic quest. It promises them vitality, freedom, and fulfillment, but, as literary works show, the end of the quest is either annihilation or imprisonment” (40). That is, the female hero who seeks fulfillment in all aspects of identity, in selfhood, in work, and in relationships, is unlikely to achieve her goal. Her quest for identity ends nearly before it begins, as she sacrifices her selfhood to serve others, trapped within the patriarchal enclosure.

The disjunction between the possible ideal outcome of the quest of the female hero and the actual negative outcomes described in the examples used by these critics can be attributed to three basic reasons: first, the critics attempt to uncover a quest pattern operating on the structural level of the text, but concentrate for the most part on details from the surface level instead; second, they choose to focus overwhelmingly on realistic works of fiction, even when they acknowledge that the female hero of fantastic fiction can achieve a more positive outcome; and third, they constrict their interpretation of the quest structure to the overly simplistic monomyth. In order to avoid similar difficulties in my analysis, I will examine both the underlying structure and the socially revealing surface details. Instead of considering a wide range of texts covering different genres, time periods, and authors, I will concentrate on three quest fantasies by one of the leading authors in the subgenre. Also, although reference will be made when appropriate and relevant to the various monomythic structures just described, the overall critical template used will be the duomyth, which is defined and described in Chapter 2. Finally, rather than attempting to analyze the texts in light of the entire quest structure, from departure through initiation to eventual return, I will limit my examination to the key elements of

the female hero's quest for an identity that includes love. Thus elements of the quest structure not pertaining to the love relationship, such as the relationship with a parental figure or the specific tasks performed by the hero, fall outside the scope of this study.

Although a purely structural analysis, while it provides intriguing insights into a body of texts, is limited in that it ignores the sociocultural context, it is equally problematic to focus solely on the surface details of the text without clearly distinguishing underlying structural elements. One possible reason for the confusing disjunction between the positive possible outcome of the female hero's quest and the often negative narrated outcome is that the above critics attempt to define a structure of the female hero's quest, while their focus remains on the surface level of the text. Pearson and Pope note this problem themselves when they critically evaluate Campbell's work by saying that "The [cultural] assumption that the male is subject and hero and the female is object and heroine injects patriarchal sex-role assumptions into the discussion of the archetypal hero's journey; this confuses the issue and obscures the true archetypal elements of the pattern" (4). This claim is true, and the examples which they cite from Campbell are valid, but they themselves do not avoid the injection of cultural assumptions in constructing their own analysis. Simply reversing the positions of the subject and object does not change the use of "patriarchal sex-role assumptions" that are brought into the argument with every example used. This is clearly evidenced in the words chosen to name the terms of the stages of the hero's quest, particularly in the stage which they have named The Emperor's New Clothes. The phrase is indicative of their assessment of the female hero's surface dealings with the male characters in her story. It is a reference to

Andersen's well-known fairytale, in which a vain male ruler and all of his courtiers are deceived into believing that there is something wrong with them when they cannot see the Emperor's fabulous garments, when the truth is that the Emperor is naked. The message conveyed by Pearson and Pope's choice of terminology is that appearances can deceive, and that what promises to be something beautiful and wonderful can bring instead humiliation and misery.

Naming this stage of the female hero's quest with the title of Andersen's fairy tale clearly connects the moral of that tale with their evaluation of the cultural assumptions associated with the male figure encountered by the female hero during this stage. Pearson and Pope begin this section with a discussion of the seducer, similar to the temptress figure in Campbell's monomyth, an encounter that "entice[s] the female hero into a new situation that teaches her an important lesson [. . .but] restricts the hero so that she cannot act independently" (143). They claim that the seducer can be a positive figure at the structural level, helping the female hero to slay the myth of virginity and introducing her to a world of sexual experience that helps her to leave the safe but confined world of her childhood and family; in other words, the seducer can perform a positive function by forcing the female hero to begin her quest for identity. At the surface level, however, the seducer is described negatively, as the female hero is abandoned to survive alone in a society that condemns her for having fallen. Examples include Hardy's Tess Durbeyfield, whose quest ends in her death, and Hawthorne's Hester Prynne. Pearson and Pope cannot quite seem to make up their minds whether the seducer performs a helpful service or a dreadful act. This ambivalent reading may be the result of a confusion between the

function performed by the character at the structural level and the sociocultural qualities that they associate with the character and his or her actions at the surface level.

One way to resolve this problem is to examine more closely the structure underlying the text, to move away, at least initially, from the sociocultural assumptions encoded in the surface level. Carolyn Heilbrun notes the advantage of using such a reading technique to overcome the lack of female role models; the female reader able to dig deeper, past the surface, can ignore the gender attributes of strong heroes and can identify with the adventuring hero no matter what the surface description. "Structuralism supports this admonition to ignore the marked gender [at the surface level] in the characters of myth and fairy tales." She goes on to provide as an example Levi-Strauss' reading of the symbols of the sun and the moon as differently gendered in the myths of different cultures, and additionally his reading of the meaning of another myth to relate to the trading of women by men, and notes that there is nothing in the structural patterns themselves to say that women could not be responsible for the act of trading. The gender differences are encoded on the surface level, not in the underlying structure of the myth or other story; "the structures are human, not sexually dictated" (Heilbrun 149).

In order to read a text at the structural level rather than the surface level, the critic must be careful to make a distinction between the character who is described and the actor who performs actions. Vladimir Propp, in his analysis of Russian folktales, clearly makes this distinction, identifying characters in such tales by the actions that they perform, when he reminds the reader that he has "sharply separated the question of *who* acts in the tale from the questions of the actions themselves" (87). He goes on to note that

the surface details provide the aesthetic component and contain the emotional depth of the tale,⁶ but at the structural level what counts is the action. The hero quests, the object is sought for, the helper helps, the mentor advises, the opponent opposes. In Propp's analysis, a character is defined according to what he or she does.

Narratologist Mieke Bal has made use of and further defined Propp's terminology. Bal makes a distinction between the actor or character at the surface level of the story and the "actant" at the structural level (197). To name the actantial function performed by the central character of the quest, Bal prefers the term "subject" to "hero" (197), in part because of the cultural biases associated with the term; however, I believe that in the context of the quest fantasy, "subject" is too passive a term to use to describe the actant who seeks, who acts, who desires the object of value. The "object" is another actant, which can be filled by non-human characters or inanimate objects; further actants are the categories of "helper" and "opponent" who either facilitate or hinder the hero's quest for the object (201). The actant is a function of the character, a job to be performed. Because it is so easy to confuse the structural and surface levels of the text, Bal feels it necessary to caution that the "helper is not always the person who acts to bring about the ending desired by the reader" (199). This could account for the confusion in Pearson and Pope's discussion of the figure of the seducer as the person who simultaneously awakens the female hero to her quest and, on the surface level of the text, destroys her life and happiness.

⁶ Propp does not mention that the surface details also carry the burden of sociocultural expectations held by both authors and readers, as has already been noted.

Bal also notes that it is not necessary to have a numerically equal correspondence between character and actant. That is, one actantial position can be occupied by more than one surface character; the role of helper can be filled by several helpful characters. Similarly, a character is not bound to fill one actantial role; one character, uniquely named and described at the surface level, can function in multiple different actantial roles at the structural level. This doubling is related to one of the techniques of the fantastic impulse as described by Hume: contrast.

The use of the double is common in fantastic fiction, as the author using fantastic techniques of contrast can thus place two characters side by side so that the reader can clearly see two possibilities. It is not unusual, as Bal acknowledges, that one actant at the structural level be split into two or more characters at the surface. Sometimes the double represents the shadow side of the hero; sometimes it represents the possible apotheosis of the hero, what the hero could become if the tasks are successfully completed.⁷ It is common in fairy tales to have three brothers or three sisters attempting to achieve the quest in order to demonstrate different possible outcomes. The eldest sister undertakes the quest, does not heed the advice of the helpers, and fails. The youngest sister undertakes the same quest, is patient and kind to the helpers, and succeeds. Thus alternative possibilities to the hero's quest can be illustrated; recognition that at the structural level the other characters are actually aspects of the hero can aid in interpreting these

⁷ Another possibility, as Marilyn Jurich notes, is that the character "is frequently segmented; that is, the qualities or values she represents are split, often polarized. Elements or oppositions normally located in a single human being are distributed into separate individuals" (144).

alternative outcomes.

As previously mentioned, Heilbrun sees the possibilities open in a structural reading of the text, and she notes that in Propp's analysis of the fairy tale according to character functions, only one is marked for gender, the princess-bride who is also the object of value of the quest. Reading structurally, the reader is free to identify with characters who are not gendered female on the surface level; reading structurally, the critic is free to note the actions performed by the hero and other actants in terms of whether or not such actions advance or impede the goal of the quest. In order to support extraliterary claims regarding the position of female authors and readers in the world of consensus reality, the critic does need to eventually return to the connections between the quest structure and the actual experience of the gendered hero, but it is first necessary to clarify the structure.

A part of the problem with keeping the surface and structural levels separate in a critical reading of the hero's quest is the lack of heroic female role models at the surface level of realistic texts, which form the majority of the examples provided by Pratt, Pearson and Pope, Edwards, and Heller in their versions of the monomyth. Works that can be described as realistic, that strive to reflect the real sociocultural world of the author and readers, are also forced to reflect the realities, the real situations and conditions, faced by women in the real world. Obviously the structure of the female hero's quest suggests an ideal outcome that has not been realized for many women, and this is one reason for the disjunction between the ideal outcome suggested by the structure and the negative outcomes actualized in the critics' choice of examples. But it is possible to tell the tale of

the female hero's quest without having to accurately reflect all of the realities of the patriarchal world. A writer can choose to make use of the fantastic technique of subtraction, described by Hume, to subtract some of the more painful realities that limit the growth and freedom of women in the world of consensus reality, in order to free the female heroes of the narrative world and suggest alternative possibilities to the real-world reader.

Realistic fiction makes more use of the literary technique of mimesis which reflects sociocultural reality, while fantastic fiction,⁸ as previously noted, makes more use of the literary technique of fantasy. Although Pratt and the other critics discussed here see mostly negative outcomes for the female hero's quest in the examples drawn from realistic fiction, they note that science fiction, a genre in which the impulse of fantasy is clearly at work, provides the possibilities for more positive outcomes. Throughout their discussion of the stages of the female hero's quest, Pearson and Pope usually begin each section by stating the ideal outcome for the female hero at each stage; in these cases, the works cited as examples illustrating the ideal outcome are generally works recognized as fantastic, such as *The Wizard of Oz*. They then go on to discuss the many ways in which

⁸ Having already distinguished between "fantasy" as a genre and as a mode of narrative production, it remains to clarify my use of the ambiguous term "fantastic" which I am using to describe narrative works marked by the predominant impulse of fantasy and the use of its techniques of addition, subtraction, and contrast. For Rosemary Jackson, following and expanding upon the work of Tzvetan Todorov, the term "fantastic" refers to a very narrow group of literary works marked by the hesitation in interpretation of events between a natural and a supernatural explanation, coming between the "uncanny" and the "marvelous," into which category Jackson consigns most of what we would consider works of fantasy: "fairy tales, romance, much science fiction" (32). Such an interpretation of the term "fantastic" is too narrow to be useful in a study of most of the literary works considered to be part of the genre of fantasy.

the female hero's quest can be thwarted, using examples from realistic fiction. Thus the critics tacitly acknowledge that the underlying structure of the hero's quest can take different surface forms according to whether the narrative world inhabited by the hero is produced primarily by the mimetic or by the fantastic impulse; occasionally this acknowledgment is explicit, as in Pratt's observation that "[o]nly in the fantasy cultures of science fiction does [the young female hero] retain freedom to control her own body and to fulfill an adult social function" (168). She further acknowledges that "[i]n the genre of science fiction women authors are sometimes able to project visions of worlds where heroes dare *not* to be female, transcending the gender limitations characterizing more conventional novels" (35). The key is that fantasy allows the author and readers to imagine the world differently, to become aware of other possibilities, where mimesis forces the author to reproduce the conditions of the present; the more "realistic" and true to life the narrative world is, the more likely is it that the status quo is maintained; the more "fantastic" the narrative world, the more it departs from the constraints of reality, the more possible it becomes to subvert the status quo by "help[ing] to liberate the reader from lazily relying on standard assumptions about culture and society" (Hume 162).

Readers of realistic fiction who feel disempowered in the sociocultural world they inhabit would likely have a pessimistic response to realistic fiction, as it reproduces a world in which they feel uncomfortable; however, readers of fantastic fiction who feel similarly disempowered may gain a sense of strength, an optimism, in reading works of fantasy, because they can read about and vicariously participate in alternatives to the situations which make them unhappy. Realistic fiction is likely to reinforce the female

reader's sense of powerlessness in a society dominated by hierarchies of power; fantastic fiction can empower the reader to envision and work towards a society of individuals equally in possession of the power-within that comes from an understanding of a unique self rather than power-over of one small group dominating the rest. Northrop Frye claims that "[f]iction in the last generation or so has turned increasingly from realism to fantasy, partly because fantasy is the normal technique for fiction writers who do not believe in the permanence or continuity of the society they belong to" (138). It is not simply that writers and readers of fantastic fiction do not believe in the continuity of the sociocultural world of their consensus reality; rather it is that they desire for that world to continue as it is no longer. They wish and hope for a transformation of that world into one in which they can feel more comfortable, more empowered.⁹

It is true that there is a possible danger in turning to those subgenres of fantasy which are set in a romanticized version of the historical past, as is much of quest fantasy, as opposed to those works of science fiction which are set in the present or the future, as

⁹ The claim that fantasy produces a more optimistic version of the world of consensus reality is of course simplified for the purposes of the present discussion. It is certainly possible for authors to make use of the mode of fantasy to produce unrealistic narrative worlds in which the characters have less control over their environments rather than more, and suffer traumas more frightening and disempowering than those experienced by readers, leading to a pessimistic response. Such works are often categorized as dark fantasy or horror, and are more closely related than quest fantasy to Todorov's and Jackson's definition of the fantastic. Jackson in particular attempts to account for these different approaches in her discussion of three modes of production: the mimetic, the marvellous, and the fantastic. She sees the last as combining elements of the first two, leading to the hesitation in explaining narrative events which is Todorov's defining quality of the fantastic (33-4). I prefer Kathryn Hume's explanation of modes of production, which in effect combines the marvellous and the fantastic into one narrative impulse which can take many different forms.

Brian Attebery cautions when he notes that “a willingness to return to the narrative structures of the past can entail as well an unquestioning acceptance of its social structures” (87). However, just as the narrative worlds of science fiction, whether near future or far distant, are worlds in which female characters can be free of the constraints of the present, so too can the narrative worlds of fantasy, inspired by but not slavishly reflective of the sociocultural worlds of the historical past, be settings in which the female hero can explore a sense of private selfhood and public role that is not bound by the restrictions of the world of consensus reality. The use of the impulse of fantasy to produce narrative worlds which can be very different from our own is a strength in relating the possibilities open to the female hero. In a work of fantastic fiction, marked by the predominant use of the impulse of fantasy, the “very avoidance of the details of contemporary society gives it flexibility, for its heroines need not carry such cultural burdens” (Attebery 103-4) as those carried by actual women, past and present, in the real sociocultural world.

A method which carefully considers the distinction between structural and surface levels of the text and the narrower focus on both the relevant elements of the quest structure and a body of similar texts produced by a single author should go a long way towards resolving the disjunction between the possible ideal outcome of the female hero's quest for an identity including love and the actual negative outcome described so often. However, there are further problems inherent in the structure of the monomyth itself. These problems, and the alternative structural pattern of the duomyth which allows for a more positive reading of the female hero's quest, are outlined in the following chapter.

Chapter 2 - The Duomyth and Marriage

Marriage, in fiction even more than in life, has been the woman's adventure, the object of her quest, her journey's end. (Heilbrun 171)

All of the critics discussed in the previous chapter have basically described the pattern of the female hero's quest in terms of a monomyth, but a close structural examination of fantastic texts shows that the monomyth is not the overriding narrative structural pattern. The monomyth suggests that there is only one true answer to be found, the knowledge of which is buried deep in the hero's psyche, waiting to be discovered. The answer to the question, in a monomyth, is a single answer, an identity for the self, for the seeker, that can be known. This answer can be found in many of the modern versions of fairy tales and reconstructed myths, but for the past several decades the texts marketed in the genre of fantasy, works produced using primarily the impulse of fantasy, have not revealed such a simple, singular answer to the question of identity.

What is revealed in the structural analysis of fantastic texts is that the monomyth is actually not the most common quest structure currently used in fantastic narratives. Bal herself notes the possibilities of multiple quests, overlapping quests, subquests: at the very least complications of the monomyth structure, if not different in description and interpretation. I have, in previous structural studies, noted the use of the multiple quest in epic fantasy, in which each companion of a larger fellowship is also the hero of his or her own quest. Often, the quests of a number of secondary characters turn out to be smaller

movements in the quest of another character. So the monomyth, despite its widespread use in analyses of narratives written and filmed, realistic and fantastic, is not the only possible narrative structure of the hero's quest. An examination of quest fantasies centred on female heroes, especially but not only those by Patricia A. McKillip, reveals that the underlying structure is not the monomyth, but the duomyth.¹⁰

Rita Haunert, in her analysis of *Riddle-Master*, understands the duomyth as a structure in which "the male *and the female*, in their separate journeys, become adults and attain equal status" (76). But in my view the duomyth describes more than the fact that the couple undertake separate journeys, although they do, and more than that they become adults of equal status, although they do. A duomyth is more than the telling of two separate quests in which the heroes interact. It is the single quest of one hero, one actant at the structural level, split into two characters at the surface level, a quest further marked by each character taking on multiple roles, shifting between character functions rather than remaining locked into only one role. In the duomyth as it is revealed in McKillip's quest fantasies, two characters, related to each other as male and female lovers¹¹ at the surface level of character, undertake what appear to be separate quests but are really, at

¹⁰ I am borrowing this term from Rita Haunert, who gives credit to Dr. Thomas Wymer for coining the word "duomyth" to describe the structure of Morgon and Raederle's quest in McKillip's *Riddle-Master* trilogy. While Haunert refers to the term again in her conclusion, she does not attempt to describe the structure of the duomyth, nor does she make use of it as a critical tool during her analysis of McKillip's work.

¹¹ At least in the particular works discussed in this study, and in most other works of fantasy, which conventionally deal for the most part with heterosexual relationships, the duomyth describes the shared quest of a male and female partnership. There are a few works of fantasy featuring homosexual relationships, and it may be possible to trace the duomyth structure in such works, but such a task is outside the scope of the current study.

the underlying structural level, a single quest split between the masculine and feminine aspects of the hero.

Examining a text in light of the duomyth rather than the monomyth suggests a very different exploration and outcome for the female hero's quest, and resolves some of the difficulties encountered by the previously described models. Pearson and Pope propose a model very similar to Campbell's monomyth, different only in the inversion of gender roles. Pratt's model of the monomyth is a closed circular structure, similar to Campbell's, and does not allow for movement outside of rigid, gender-defined roles. Similarly, Edwards, Heller, and other critics reclaiming the role of hero for the female in the Psyche-structure basically invert the gender of the hero and many of the other characters common to the fairytale quest. The problem with inverting gender to analyze the structure of Campbell's monomyth is that the new monomyth produced does not escape the boundaries imposed by the dichotomies of power, the hierarchies of dominant and subordinate, inherent in the monomyth structure. With a focus on the single hero, the one character with whom the reader is encouraged to identify, journeying alone with the help and advice of other minor, obviously secondary and supporting characters along the way, and achieving the quest for identity in a way that subsumes the other aspects of the personality and makes the hero a leader of the community, with power and control over the other members of that community, the monomyth, whether it is told about a male or a female hero, maintains and reinforces the sociocultural community built upon hierarchies of difference rather than equality of difference.

Pratt's version of the monomyth requires a complete separation of the female hero

from the patriarchal community. In her structure, the female hero is strong only when she is either too young or too old to be of use to the patriarchal system as a wife and mother. As a young girl, the female hero is in tune with the green world, with her own private natural world. As a mature woman, either escaping or released from the bonds of marriage and motherhood due to her advancing age, the female hero retreats back into the private green world. Such a separation of different worlds, a forcing of choice, an “either/or” between freedom in the green world and enclosure in the patriarchy, is simply an attempt to avoid positioning the hero in hierarchies of difference. Avoiding a hierarchical system, or opposing it by simply switching the categories in opposition, does nothing to resolve the problem at the core of such a system. The female hero of a monomyth may replace the male as master of the two worlds, or may turn her back on the system altogether, but neither seems a satisfactory solution to the problem of difference. Becoming the master over others perpetuates a system that is intolerant of difference, while pretending that no such system exists seems a futile attempt to assert that there is no difference to be dealt with. Certainly it is possible, using the techniques of the fantastic, to create narrative worlds in which there is no difference at all, but such worlds are often too incompatible with the real world inhabited by the reader to be satisfactorily believable.

The structure of the duomyth suggests another possible resolution to the problem of difference, a resolution found not in the mastery of a single hero or in the denial of mastery, but in a union between equals instead. In the monomyth, the focus is on the single individual hero; in the duomyth, the structural role of the questing hero is split into

two surface characters, one male, one female. This use of doubling is a common technique in both realistic and fantastic works, and could be considered as an example of the technique of contrast which Hume sees as an expression of the impulse of fantasy. Their quests may seem on the surface level of the text to be different quests, but on the structural level their quest can be seen to be singular, one quest shared between the two. Further evidence for this interpretation can often be found in the surface details of the text, as both male and female hero visit the same locations, perform the same tasks, oppose the same villain, and are helped by the same or similar secondary characters.

Another distinction between the monomyth and duomyth is the fact that in the duomyth, characters are not locked into a specific and defined role. In the monomyth, one character, the protagonist or viewpoint character with whom the reader identifies, is the hero, the one who is on a quest. Other characters play secondary roles in the hero's tale, as villain or opponent, or helper, or the object of the quest. And these characters are locked into their roles; for instance, in many works of quest fantasy, particularly those that slavishly follow the formulaic conventions of the monomyth structure, the opponent, or villain, is evil simply because he or she is evil, without motivation or chance of redemption. On the other hand, in the duomyth, there is a sense of disjunction between characters and functions. The two characters who jointly fill the role of hero shift between many functions, playing different roles within each other's separate quests. The female is not locked into the stereotypical role of the passive object of value, the princess-bride, but can be hero, helper, even villain; similarly, the male hero is not only the hero of his quest or the object of hers, but is also helper and villain. So in the duomyth, the idea of

constructing an identity that includes different roles, that integrates all aspects of the psyche and equalizes hierarchies of difference, is available at the surface as well as at the structural level.

The quest described by the duomyth is also equal; that is, both male and female heroes fulfill similar functions on an equal basis, rather than one dominating the other. Just as the male hero plays multiple roles in the quest of the female hero, so too does she play the same multiple roles in his quest. It is not that the male hero seeks and wins the princess-bride, or that the female hero finds her identity and a sense of completion only in union with the prince; both male and female heroes in the duomyth function as questers, as objects to be won, as guides and helpers to others, and even as the opponent placing obstacles in the hero's path.

The monomyth's focus on a single hero and the locking of secondary characters into roles of lesser importance reinforces the interpretation of the outcome of the hero's quest as the achievement of authority in a system of hierarchy, as a gaining of power-over others. Thus the hero's quest for identity results in a sense of a unique self that is more important than that of others, and in taking the dominant role in relationships with others, including the loved one. But the duomyth, by splitting the focus between two characters sharing the role of hero and the achieving of the quest, promotes an interpretation of the successful outcome of the quest as the achieving of a union between equals; the shifting of the characters between primary and secondary roles rather than being locked into one role suggests that both have the opportunity to develop a sense of identity as strong individuals equally capable. The focus on balance and union is inherent in the structure of

the duomyth, just as the problem of hierarchy and authority is inherent in the structure of the monomyth.

An important element of the quest pattern is a structural division between two worlds. For Campbell, these worlds are the sense of conscious social reality and unconscious individual identity, or the qualities of masculine and feminine attributes of the self. For Pratt, the two worlds are the private, natural world of the female and the public, social world of the male. And even in Edwards' discussion of the tale of Psyche, in which her focus is on the surface details and the function of the female hero rather than on the structural pattern underlying the tale, there is still a distinct division in her work, reflected in the organization of the Table of Contents, between the cave of Amor, in which Psyche is first enclosed and forbidden to look upon her husband, and the heights of Olympus, to which Psyche ascends after completing her tasks.

In both the monomyth and the duomyth, the two worlds represent binary oppositions, no matter what they are: old/new, conscious/unconscious, public/private, male/female, light/dark. Traditionally, especially in Jungian interpretation but not limited to that, binary oppositions have not been viewed in isolation but as elements in a larger system in which each pair of the binary can be related to a similar binary. The male has been associated with the public world, with the conscious mind, with intellect, with technology, with light, and, ethically, with good, thus taking the superior position in a comparative analysis. Similarly, the female has been associated with the private world of the domestic sphere, with the mysterious unconscious mind, with emotions, with nature, with the dark, all often evaluated as evil, or at least inferior.

Arguably, it is not the separating of such categories into pairs, into two worlds, that is the essential problem, although drawing such a clear line between pairs in opposition does ignore the liminal blurring of boundaries found in the moments of dusk and dawn. Night and day are different, as are men and women, and it makes little sense to argue that no such distinction exists. But it is less obvious that distinction necessarily equals hierarchy. Night and day are different entities, but each has advantages and disadvantages. Similarly, men and women have different appearances and biological or social characteristics, but there is no rational reason to prefer one over the other. Therefore, the problem lies less in recognizing difference than in the valuing of one element of the pair over the other, in the way that the two worlds are resolved at the end of the monomyth. The hero of the monomyth becomes the master of these oppositions by subsuming them within him- or herself. The male hero achieves the quest by mastering these oppositions, by overcoming the shadow side of his personality, by incorporating within himself the anima that represents the feminine. Similarly, the female hero realizes that the masculine is not an external force able to exert control over her, but an internal force to be acknowledged, developed, and ultimately controlled. In Pearson and Pope's model of the monomyth, the female hero must slay the dragon of the myth of sexual difference; realizing that the masculine is an aspect of her own personality, she must overcome it, master it, in order to be whole. The sense of integration, at least in the monomyth, is not that the hero recognizes within him- or herself an equal balance between dark and light, masculine and feminine, but that one half of the pairing is stronger and able to incorporate, or dominate, the other.

In the duomyth, the resolution is not through hierarchy, but through balance, a union of equals. The duomyth structure neither maintains nor opposes the system of binary opposites. Difference does exist; there are two worlds, two opposing sides, light and dark, male and female. However, no ethical or evaluative status is assigned to differences. In works founded on the duomyth structure, the hero does not master the two worlds; instead, the dual hero mediates or bridges the two worlds, recognizing the ambiguity, appreciating both the differences between opposites and the variety, the complexity of the world.¹²

A common symbol of the resolution of the two worlds in quest fantasy is marriage, reflecting the narrative importance of marriage in the fairytales and myths that are the subgenre's literary sources. Marriage is also the expected outcome of the hero's quest for love, as marriage is often the ultimate goal of love relationships in the world inhabited by authors and readers. In the monomyth, the hero gains mastery over the two worlds, and the marriage at the surface level reflects the nature of marriage in a system of hierarchies of power and authority. Campbell's examples demonstrate the male hero's attitude towards marriage in such a system; once gained, the prize-bride becomes something possessed, to be used or disposed of at the hero's whim. He gives the example of a hero who deserts his bride while she sleeps in the marriage-bed, but does not

¹² This description of the duomyth echoes what Dana Heller, following the lead of Jessica Benjamin, terms "intersubjectivity" (31). Heller goes on to explain that "intersubjectivity challenges the coherence of the solitary hero [. . .] by expressing and empowering a capacity for self-realization through identification with others [. . .]. In feminized quests, recognition of others as subjects in their own right and relationships between two equal subjects [. . .] are essential to the protagonist's heroic development" (31-2).

condemn the hero-husband for his actions (172). Structurally, the male hero has met the requirements to resolve the two worlds. When the hero of Campbell's monomyth is female, the surface details of the narrative fulfilling the structural function of marriage reveal a concept of marriage even less desirable, as "the heavenly husband descends to her and conducts her to his bed — whether she will or no" (119); Campbell's examples of marriage for the female hero include the rapes of female heroes by various Greek gods, suggesting that culturally, at a perhaps unacknowledged level, what defines "marriage" is simply a sexual union in which the male gains power. Rape of the male hero by a female god is not discussed, presumably because of the cultural assumption that a man would not decline to participate in a sexual act and so is not likely to be raped. But it is problematic that the Sacred Marriage of the female hero, the act that supposedly gives her mastery over the two worlds, can be an act in which she has no power of her own but is instead subject to the power-over of another who violates her right to choose her lover and to deny access to her physical self, which should be the ultimate expression of selfhood and identity.

In the monomyths described by the female critics, the female hero does not fare any better when she marries. For Pratt, the strong female hero is one who avoids marriage altogether, living as an eccentric on the fringes of patriarchal society. For Pearson and Pope, marriage is the negative outcome of the quest, occurring when the female hero fails to slay the myth of romantic love and succumbs to the persuasions of a male suitor. The meaning of marriage in fiction is coloured by the meaning of marriage in a patriarchal society, in which women have been bought and bartered and their value decreases if they

are not virgins. For these critics, marriage is the tragic and failed end of the female hero's quest. They claim that passion is a destructive force, citing examples of female heroes who deny passionate marriages in favour of either being alone or marrying a platonic friend. They note that the hero's sexuality is "complicated by the societal prohibitions regarding female sexuality, will, and independence. After sexual initiation, the hero is expected to die or to marry. Her sexuality is viewed as the property of her rapist, lover, or husband; it is not her own" (160). Pearson and Pope view marriage as another kind of seduction and disillusion, which it is not for Campbell, who makes a distinction between the female temptress figure who attempts to lead the male hero away from the quest, and the female figure who is the object of the Sacred Marriage, the moment that marks the hero's successful achievement of the quest and signals his impending return to the community.

Pearson and Pope do not seem to see a positive value in the female hero's marriage, although they make general claims about the hero's integration of masculine and feminine values at the structural level. However, at the surface level, the successful female hero is autonomous and alone in herself, having no need for the male character.

Making clear their negative valuing of the quest for love, they state that

the ultimate problem faced by a writer who uses the romantic love story as a vehicle for exploring a woman's growth toward wholeness and independence is designing an appropriate ending. Most often, the author kills the hero rather than detailing a compromising accommodation to a patriarchal society inimical to female heroism. (175)

This may be true in works of realistic fiction, but it is not necessarily so in fantastic works; Pearson and Pope acknowledge this possibility when they claim that “[h]eroes in fantasy and myth enjoy a magical, symbiotic relationship with the culture.” However, seeming to contradict their earlier claim that many female heroes must be slain rather than achieve love in a patriarchal society, they go on to say that “[i]n realistic literature, the kingdom is not necessarily miraculously transformed but the hero usually is rewarded with love and community on a smaller scale” (226). So even in works of realistic fiction, it is possible for the female hero to fully achieve the quest for identity, gaining both a unique sense of self and a happy marriage.

Pearson and Pope are not alone in acknowledging the rare, in their view, possibility of egalitarian marriages; that is, the female hero can occasionally successfully achieve the quest for an identity that includes love by finding a man who has himself overcome the gender differences imposed on him by patriarchal society. Pratt says that although equal-marriage novels are “so very few in number, [they] perform the same prescriptive and prophetic function as feminist science fiction” (58); in other words, the equal-marriage novel is similar to science fiction in providing the possibility of reimagining the relationships between men and women, so that the resolution of the female hero’s quest can end in equality rather than in submission. Pearson and Pope acknowledge a small number of stories in which the marriage can be between equals,¹³

¹³ It is also interesting to note that Pearson and Pope consider the detective novel, along with gothic romance, to be favoured by women authors and readers. They make the rather startling claim that detective novels such as Sayers’ can be categorized with other works of fantasy and science fiction (68).

citing Dorothy Sayers' *Gaudy Night*, in which the male detective Lord Peter Wimsey is replaced as hero by Harriet Vane, a woman whom Lord Peter has loved from first sight and whom he has previously saved from execution. Harriet has so far refused to marry Lord Peter because of her feelings of guilt and insecurity, believing herself to be unworthy of such a great man. However, at the end of *Gaudy Night*, Harriet realizes that she is Wimsey's equal when he "resists the temptation to save her" life during the solving of the crime. According to Pearson and Pope, the only thing saving this relationship from becoming a typical "concession to the myth of romantic love" is that Wimsey "gives her the message that he knows she is a hero capable of saving herself" rather than continuing to play the unequal roles of "knight" and "damsel in distress" which the pair have played since he rescued her from the gallows. Therefore, in such a case, the "classical happy ending promises the reward of an egalitarian marriage" (72). Although I am not familiar with Sayers' work, Pearson and Pope's description of the series and this particular book certainly sounds as though it could be termed a duomyth; Wimsey has been the hero in several previous books, in which Harriet has been his love interest and the object of his desire, but the roles have now been reversed.

Carl Yoke makes use of Pearson and Pope's concept of egalitarian marriage in his analysis of the female hero's quest in the works of science fiction author Andre Norton. According to Yoke, "In Norton's stories, this state of integrated wholeness [the androgynous integration of masculine/feminine] is often symbolized by bonding with a male [. . .] but the new marriage relationship is quite different from those in the cultures that the female heroes have fled" (90). The examples which Yoke uses to illustrate his

understanding of Pearson and Pope's notion of equal marriage detail Nortonian heroes who choose husbands who are also exiled in some way from their communities, who are different from the patriarchal norm, and who are willing to recognize that their wives are equals rather than dependents.

At the structural level, marriage as a symbol of the resolution of the two worlds can be seen symbolically as the integration of masculine and feminine elements by the hero. Carolyn Heilbrun notes this at the same time as she warns of the dangers in relying only upon such a structural reading. The fairy tale "ends in marriage, which, however much it may be taken as the paradigm of selfhood, even of a woman's uniting with her masculine self, has been for many centuries the enslaving institution of women" (146). This points up the need for any structural reading to be considered as the beginnings of a deeper reading that takes into account the sociocultural realities surrounding a text's production and reception, providing a method by which to achieve further insights into a text rather than the only meaning possible. Despite that caution, marriage can still function as a symbol of the successful outcome of the female hero's quest for love and identity. "Some of the heroes do, like their fairy tale predecessors, mark their passage by marriage, but in no case does marriage constitute or justify their achievements" (Attebery 104). In other words, the female hero of fantastic fiction has found it possible to achieve the quest for an identity that includes both authentic selfhood and a loving relationship based on equality rather than hierarchy. In fantastic fiction, marriage can function as a sign that the two worlds of self and Other, masculine and feminine, can be resolved through a recognition of difference without the power imbalance often associated with

marriage in realistic fiction.

Once recognized and described, the structure of the duomyth can be seen to underlie many narratives in popular culture. One example is the popular film genre of romantic comedy; movies in this genre tend to focus equally on both the male and female leads, and at the end of the film both characters have been changed by the love relationship. The duomyth can also be traced in many works of fantastic fiction,¹⁴ notably in the quest fantasies of American author Patricia A. McKillip.

McKillip is one of the most respected authors of fantasy; Stephen R. Donaldson, a noted critic of the genre of fantasy and himself a well-respected author in the field, has said of her that “There are no finer writers than Patricia A. McKillip.” Over the last three decades, she has produced many complex and lyrical works of fantasy and science fiction. One of her earliest works, *The Forgotten Beasts of Eld*, published in 1974, features a female wizard, unusual at the time of publication and still uncommon, as most authors follow the tradition of depicting wizards as the stereotypical white-bearded male. McKillip then produced a trilogy, known collectively as *Riddle-Master* and published originally in three volumes in the late 1970s, about a reluctant farmer-prince’s quest to unriddle the truth of his destiny in a powerfully conceived secondary world of myth and magic. Key to the critical success of this work was McKillip’s reluctance to follow the conventional good against evil formula common to most works of fantasy; in her

¹⁴ Other examples include Joan D. Vinge’s science fantasy trilogy beginning with *The Snow Queen*, and Ursula Le Guin’s tetralogy known collectively as *The Earthsea Chronicles*. Both make use of the motif of the quest, and alternate in focus between the male and female heroes’ perspectives.

narrative worlds, characters and their motivations are ambiguous, and evil is as likely to be found in the unexplored psyche of the protagonist as it is to reside in an external force to be defeated. McKillip followed the trilogy with a series of short stories and a number of increasingly complex works of fantasy, many of them making use of the quest structure, including the fairytale fantasy *Winter Rose*, published in 1996, an enigmatic version of the Psyche-structure, with its sources in Andersen's "Snow Queen" and the ballad of Tam Lin.

All three works are quest fantasies; that is, they belong to that subgenre of fantasy in which the quest for identity is a central feature of the narrative. All of the heroes of these tales, and of quest fantasies in general, are young adults, searching for their proper place as adults in their societies, and as such these works are also considered to be coming-of-age narratives.¹⁵ Quest fantasies are also generally set in the traditional secondary world of the invented or idealized past, rather than in a recognizable present or the future of SF, although the quest story can be told in such formats. Because they are set in such an idealized past world, they are subject to Attebery's cautions about making use of the materials of past rituals and beliefs while avoiding their result, the indoctrination of the female into a submissive role. He argues that such a

danger is particularly evident when the inherited story focuses on the process of

¹⁵ The quest for identity may be of greater concern to a young hero on the verge of adulthood, and this is reflected in the fact that most quest fantasies are either written for and read by young adults, or feature younger protagonists. However, many fantasists are beginning to deal with the continuing quest of the older hero, on the verge of middle-age or other key stages of life. The hero of McKillip's *A Song for the Basilisk* is a middle-aged musician.

coming of age, the transition from immature individual to mature member of society. In the societies from which we derive our legacy of myths and fairy tales, coming of age was a process of accommodating oneself to a strictly defined social role. (87)

Attebery goes on to say, however, that “[t]he treatment of the coming of age story by women writers [. . .] demonstrates how a tradition may be made to reflect contemporary concerns, and how inherited story structures may be used to question the practices and beliefs that gave rise to them” (88). One such writer is Patricia McKillip.

Chapter 3 - The Quest for Self and the Doubling of the Hero in *Riddle-Master*

Without intentionality, without consciousness and choice, there cannot be the attainment of an adulthood based on psychological, emotional, and spiritual maturity [. . .]. Only in this truer sense can adulthood be considered as independent personhood. (Frontgia 16)

The quest for identity begins with the search for a unique sense of self, an answer to the question “Who Am I?” The answer to that question is broken into many elements: a name, a family background, a description of personal appearance, a concept of social status involving a sense of one’s professional role and personal relationships within the community. Of these elements of identity, the last requires a sense of a public persona, a place in a larger world outside of the self; the first three, however, are markers of a more personal, private self. All of these elements of identity, whether known or lacking, can be narrativized.

Names are particularly important in identifying fictional characters; in works of fantasy, the name becomes almost an emblem of the self, as it is a tradition, particularly in works in which magic plays a central role, that knowledge of a name gives others power over that individual. A character’s lack of a fixed identity can be signalled by amnesia, or by renaming, for example as a character of ordinary birth is given a more kingly name that indicates a special destiny. The character’s family background, or bloodline, is also important, and a lack of certainty about identity can be indicated by bastardy or other confusion about the character’s parentage. Physical appearances can be

disguised by masks and, in works of fantasy, transformed by magic spells or other shapechanging devices.

All of these narrative techniques are used in Patricia McKillip's *Riddle-Master*, originally published in three volumes. The first, *The Riddle-master of Hed*, tells the story of a farmer-prince, Morgon, land-ruler of a simple island province that is part of a larger country on the mainland. In this volume, Morgon journeys to the mainland, accompanied by his mentor, the harpist named Deth, in order to claim as his bride Raederle, the second most beautiful woman in the country, whom he has won in a riddle contest. However, he never reaches Raederle. His ship sinks at sea; he is tossed ashore stripped of all memory of his name and his identity, and so begins a quest that takes him throughout the realm until he is eventually betrayed by Deth, the ambiguous harpist, and taken captive by a rogue wizard posing as the High One, the transcendent and never-seen ruler of the land, who administers the system of landlaw and thus justice.

The second volume of the trilogy, *Heir of Sea and Fire*, does not immediately continue Morgon's quest, but instead relates the quest of Raederle, who leaves her own home in order to learn what has happened to Morgon. In the first volume, Raederle was described only as the object of Morgon's quest, the princess-bride; in the second volume, Raederle becomes the questing hero, and Morgon the object of her quest. Raederle encounters many of the same characters as did Morgon: Lyra, Astrin Ymrís, and the shape-changer known as Eriel, who had tried to kill Morgon; Eriel reveals to Raederle that they are kin, that Raederle shares the bloodline and the power of Morgon's enemies. In the third volume, *Harpist in the Wind*, Morgon and Raederle's quests come together,

although the point of view is mostly Morgon's. Although it would seem that Raederle's quest to find Morgon has been successful, it becomes apparent that finding Morgon has been symbolic of finding something more about herself; she and Morgon cease to function as objects of value to be found, and become instead helpers in each other's continuing quests to learn more about their identities and to develop the power-within themselves. With Morgon's help, Raederle explores her innate talents as a shape-changer, while she encourages him to confront the riddle of his ultimate destiny. Both fear the power-within that they are developing, but after a long Road of Trials and many encounters with the forces opposing their quests, they eventually take up their role as heirs to those powerful beings called the Earth-masters, whose struggles for power-over each other nearly destroyed their world in the ancient past. Apotheosized as the new High One, with Raederle as an equal at his side, Morgon ends this phase of his life's journey.

The narrative techniques of illustrating the confusion of identity are prominent in this text, particularly regarding Morgon, who must be considered the primary protagonist in view of the amount of narrative space devoted to his adventures. Naming plays a central role in Morgon's tale, first as he loses his name through amnesia, and later as he regains that name and begins a process of earning several other names, all indicative of another aspect of his identity, throughout the course of the trilogy.

Morgon loses his initial identity as Morgon, Prince of Hed, early in the narrative when the ship on which he is travelling to claim his betrothed, Raederle, the prize he has won in a riddle-game with a ghost, is sunk at sea and he is washed ashore on Wind Plain, seemingly the only survivor of the wreck. He is rescued by Astrin Ymris, the brother and

land-heir of the ruler of one of the mainland countries. Astrin is in self-imposed exile from his brother's court, living alone save for a hunting cat near the ruins of Wind Plain, one of the ancient cities of the vanished Earth-masters. Morgon cannot, try as he might, respond to Astrin's repeated question "Who are you?" When he hears the question he realizes "that there were no words in him anywhere to shape answers [. . .] a silence spun like a vortex in his head" (35). What he knew of himself, identified by his name and his birthright as Prince of Hed, is gone. Astrin tries to help Morgon to regain his name, offering a number of possible identities in a guessing game, but Morgon is silent; only the three stars on his forehead, a birthmark, speak for him, and Astrin does not understand the significance of that mark, which is not surprising, as Morgon himself has never understood the mark's significance for his entire young life. Astrin's next actions point up the importance of naming, of being able to identify oneself to others in the community; the social ritual of meeting requires that the two new associates identify themselves to each other, and although Morgon is now incapable of doing so, Astrin feels the necessity of fulfilling his own ability to name himself and provide his own birthright. "I am Astrin Ymris [. . .] the brother and land-heir of Heureu, King of Ymris" (36).

Astrin even goes so far as to attempt magic to help Morgon to recover his name, using on him a spell which in the past has caused inanimate stone to speak. But the spell is unsuccessful with Morgon; Astrin explains that "[i]t is as though you have no name. I couldn't reach the place where you have your name and your past hidden from yourself" (39). Morgon stays on Wind Plain with Astrin for several days, aiding in Astrin's archaeological work, digging in the ruins in an attempt to uncover the secrets of the

ancient past. In Astrin's company, Morgon begins to encounter some of the mysteries of which he has been unaware: the impossibility of climbing the enchanted Wind Tower, the nature of the vanished Earth-masters who had the skill and strength to build incredible cities, the mysterious strangers "shaped out of seaweed and foam and wet pearl" who come out of the sea and take on the shapes of dead men (42). All of these mysteries will play an important part in his future journeys once he has regained his name and his sense of selfhood, but at this early stage in his quest, Morgon has no answers, no names with which to identify these mysteries. Eventually Astrin decides to take Morgon to the city, in hopes of meeting someone who has met Morgon and knows something about him. And this proves to be the case, as a group of men immediately recognize the Prince of Hed, believed drowned weeks earlier. They speak his name to Astrin, and Morgon hears his own name but does not recognize it (48). His amnesia continues as they journey to Heureu's court, as Heureu speaks to him of "a father he did not know," until he sees on a table a harp on which is "inset in gold [. . .] three flawless blood-red stars" resembling the birthmark of three stars on his forehead. At the sight of the harp, Morgon at first feels "as though his voice and name and thoughts had been stripped from him a second time" but almost as soon as he touches the harp the feeling changes, as the "world slip[s] easily, familiarly into place" once again (52-3). Once again he knows his name as Morgon, his birthright as the Prince of Hed; what he does not yet realize is that the harp and the birthmark are symbols of another name which he must soon claim.

In this text, names are not singular and fixed markers of identity, but constantly shifting and changing, riddles that must be answered in order for the holder of the name

to develop a deeper understanding of selfhood. Brian Attebery takes note of the “reshuffling” of names in McKillip when he lists a variety of names drawn from “ancient history, from cosmology, and from Morgon’s personal experience” and points out that in the end, the dozen or so names “are combined and recombined [. . .] into only two beings” which are the High One and the wizard who has impersonated him through the centuries (74). Morgon undergoes a similar process of renaming: Prince of Hed, Riddle-master, Star-Bearer, the High One’s land-heir. The name “Star-Bearer” is first given to him by Lyra, the daughter of the Morgol, a female land-ruler, and Deth, the High One’s harpist, who is Morgon’s guide on his journey. Lyra has been instructed by her mother to lead Morgon to within sight of her city and then give to him a riddle related to the harp he carries and the birthmark on his face: “Who is the Star-Bearer, and what will he loose that is bound?” (83). Morgon is reluctant to take on this new name, as it signals to him a change in his identity, his conception of his self as the farmer-prince of a small community of ordinary people, into a figure of destiny for the entire mysterious and enchanting realm of the mainland. Despite his reluctance, he does take up the quest to answer the riddles of the Star-Bearer’s identity, and in doing so he learns also the identity of the hidden High One and that he is the High One’s heir, a new name to indicate a new self.

Morgon’s reluctance stems in part from his fear that in taking on the new names, in becoming the Star-Bearer and later the High One’s heir, he will have to renounce his original name and abandon his conception of self as Morgon, farmer-prince and son of Athol and Spring. He worries that the new identity is not a growth, a development, in his

identity but a complete change. This sense of transformation is echoed in the use of shapeshifting as a recurrent theme in the text. The enemies, those opposed to Morgon's quest for identity, seem to reside in the sea, but have the ability to take on any shape, including the appearance of human beings who have died. Morgon has an encounter with two of these shape-changers while he is in the company of Astrin Ymris: the red-bearded trader who inexplicably attacks them on the road to Caithnard is recognized as a trader who had died in the spring, and Astrin believes that Eriel Ymris, Heureu's wife, is not Eriel but another being who has killed her and taken her shape; his belief is proven true when Eriel attempts to kill Morgon.

One element of the tasks that first Morgon, and later Raederle, need to accomplish is to learn how to change shape, to transform their physical appearance. Morgon first learns this skill from Har, the long-lived wolf-king of Osterland, who often takes the shape of the deer-like *vesta* roaming his wintry lands. During a ritual in which Morgon and Har enter each other's minds and thoughts, Morgon learns how to take on the *vesta*-shape himself, a difficult task for the once simple farmer-prince. The task becomes easier as he continues his quest, learning from the equally long-lived Danaan, king of mountainous Isig, how to take the shape of a tree. And after his escape from imprisonment by Master Ohm under Erlenstar Mountain, when Ohm and the shape-changers pursue him throughout the realm for different reasons, Morgon manages to survive and maintain his freedom by taking on many different shapes.

What was difficult for Morgon to learn proves to be much less so for Raederle, at least initially. Her father Mathom, like previous land-rulers of An, has the ability to take

on the crow shape, a shape which Raederle reluctantly learns to assume herself after she and Morgon are united and begin their travels across the realm together. Although hesitant at first to take on any shape other than her own, insisting that she can disguise her royal appearance and famed beauty by wearing ragged clothes and dirtying her face, Raederle has no difficulty transforming into a crow when finally persuaded of the need to do so. Similarly, later in the text when she needs to take on other forms to find Morgon, who has fled the destruction of the wizards' city by shape-changers, both pursued and pursuers transforming from shape to shape, she asks Har to teach her how to take the vesta-shape, only to learn from Har that she already possesses the ability and does not need his lessons.

Raederle's ease of shape-changing, her innate ability to do something that Morgon suffers so much effort to learn, comes from her own birthright. Another marker of identity, the birthright of a character comes from his or her parentage: Morgon knows himself to be the son of Athol and Spring, but later learns that on another level he is the heir of the High One. Raederle's birthright initially seems as knowable: she is the daughter of Mathom of An and his wife Cyone, and the sister of Duac and Rood. But even in the earliest days of her individual quest, Raederle finds that her lineage may not be as clear as she has always thought. Learning from the Lord of Hel's pig-woman how to work a simple illusion, Raederle tries to answer the riddle of how she and the pig-woman are related to each other through some long-past connection to the witch Madir. "No king I ever heard of married Madir [. . .] yet somehow the blood got into the king's line" Raederle tells the woman (197). She then goes on to relate another scandal of bastardy, in

which the land-heir of a past land-ruler, Oen, was “not his own son, but the son of some strange sea-lord, who came into Oen’s bed disguised as the king” (197). Trapped for fifteen years in a tower built by the furious Oen, and trapped again by the strictures of land-rule after Oen’s death, Ylon lived only long enough to father an heir, ancestor to both Mathom and Raederle, before committing suicide (198). It is clear to the reader, who by this time is familiar with Morgon’s enemies although Raederle is not, that Ylon’s father was one of the shape-changers out of the sea, part of the force attempting to kill Morgon before he can learn his full identity.

Although the subject of this thesis is the quest of the female hero, and much of the focus is thus on Raederle, it is difficult to talk about the quest for identity in this text without devoting so much space to Morgon, who is the primary focus of the trilogy. Although Raederle’s separate quest occupies most of the second volume, making her story equal in narrative importance to Morgon’s, he is the primary focus, the obvious hero of the third and final volume. It would seem, then, that Raederle’s quest is only an element of Morgon’s, that he is the hero of a monomyth with Raederle playing a supporting role. But in that case, her importance in the second volume, in which Morgon plays only a very small role, would seem out of proportion. Attebery provides a possible explanation for McKillip’s decision to begin her trilogy by introducing a male hero and relating his quest before moving on to the quest of the female hero in terms of genre expectations. “The heroes of [fantasies by women writers] are male because we have come to expect the heroes of the sort of book they are in to be male” (97), although hopefully that generic expectation is slowly changing as more writers choose to explore

the possibilities open to the female hero. As Kathryn Hume explains in her discussion of reciprocal relations among world, author, text, and reader, often the reader's expectations, influenced by repeated reading of similar works, can force the author to follow such generic requirements (11).

Attebery further believes that Morgon, like other male heroes who seem to initiate the quests of female heroes told in the same narrative, is "androgynous enough that [McKillip] can, through [him], express general ideas about youth and its trials and discoveries. Then once the fantasy world is established, the writer may choose to explore the special experience of women in it" (97). In other words, Morgon, being described not as a stereotypical macho warrior but as a farmer and a man of peace who only reluctantly seeks power, serves as a kind of catalyst for Raederle's quest, establishing some of the elements of the quest for identity which Raederle also explores in a different way, as has already been shown.

In making this claim, Attebery is following Carolyn Heilbrun, who suggests that it is possible to read the male figure as a catalyst in the female hero's quest; she argues that the female reader can imagine that the fairy tale prince represents "her other self, that 'masculine' part of herself, externalized in the story, to which she must be awakened to achieve adulthood" (145). Attebery agrees with this assessment when he argues that the use of a male protagonist to initiate the plot can be the author's attempt to embody the qualities of independence and action; "[s]ince those qualities are culturally defined as masculine, they must enter the story in male guise, but the outcome is the redefinition of the female" (96).

If *Riddle-Master* is read as a monomyth detailing Morgon's quest, then Raederle becomes a secondary character, the goddess of the Sacred Marriage, the anima figure which Morgon must integrate within himself in order to possess a whole self. If it is read instead as a monomyth in which Raederle is the sole questing hero, then Morgon fulfills a secondary role, whether that be as a catalyst, as an animus figure, or as Pearson and Pope's seducer/husband or Annis Pratt's rapist-husband or green-world lover. Neither of these readings seems to provide a satisfactory interpretation of the text. However, if *Riddle-Master* is read instead as a duomyth, in which the function of hero is performed by both characters, with Raederle and Morgon serving as doubles created using the fantastic technique of doubling, then a different, more satisfactory reading is possible.

There is evidence in the text to support a reading that the function of hero is shared by the male and female protagonists, that their quests are not separate but are actually one shared quest. This is indicated by the sharing of some similar surface details. Not only does Raederle journey to many of the same destinations and meet many of the same characters as did Morgon during his earlier quest, but secondary characters fulfill many of the same functions in both of their quests. Two such characters are Lyra and Astrin Ymrís.

Lyra, the Morgol's daughter and land-heir and captain of the guards, serves as the warrior aspect for both Morgon and Raederle. Morgon may be a male hero, but violence and fighting do not come naturally to the farmer-prince. It is Lyra who teaches him a few things about weapons and self-defence, and she vows to protect him, a task which she later feels she has failed at. She also serves Raederle, prompting her to begin her quest by

goads her into action. Just as she had to provoke the farmer-prince into exploring the side of himself capable of aggression, so too does she act to spur Raederle into action rather than passive waiting.

Similarly, Astrin Ymris serves as a mentor, a guide and advisor, to both Morgon and Raederle. Astrin takes an amnesiac Morgon into his shelter on Wind Plain and teaches him about the mysteries of the long vanished Earth-masters. He tells Morgon about the shape-changers and their usurpation of Eriel Ymris' identity, thus giving Morgon vital knowledge about the ultimate goal of his quest. When Morgon wishes to deny his quest, it is Astrin who insists that he owes it to himself, to Raederle, and to the greater community, to continue his quest. He performs a similar function for Raederle, when she and her companions are detained in Ymris. Astrin takes Raederle to Wind Plain, to show her the same mysteries that he showed Morgon. He tells her of Eriel and the shape-changers. And it is on Wind Plain in Astrin's company that Raederle obtains the faceted gemstone that later connects her to the High One and gives her a vital clue to the High One's identity; the answer to this riddle serves to aid both Morgon's quest to discover his own identity and her quest to learn about and accept her heritage and the abilities associated with it, two quests which at a structural level are the same.

The two characters shift between functions. At first, Morgon's quest seems to follow the typical pattern of the monomyth. It is initially generated by his desire to be worthy of "the second most beautiful woman in the three portions of An" (24), whose hand in marriage he has already won. He is the subject, the seeker, the hero of the quest, and Raederle is its object of value, the princess-bride, the prize in a riddle game, along

with a crown. Morgon has promised Raederle's brother to win the riddle game even though he does not know that her father the "King made a vow at her birth to give her only to the man who took the crown of Aum from Peven" (17). However Morgon declares that he "could never ask Raederle to marry me if she had no other reason than Mathom's vow to accept me. It's her choice, not Mathom's" (73), thus even in the beginning of his quest demonstrating that he is not the typical patriarchal hero, that he does not necessarily view women as lesser than men. Haunert sees this also when she notes that "Morgon not only considers Raederle to be more than the prize he won in a riddle-game, he also considers himself to be unworthy of her love if he hides from his true self, his true name, his adult self; in fact, the language suggests that he is himself, if not a prize, at least the gift to be offered to the one he loves" (107). Despite this promising start, in the first volume Morgon is the questing hero and Raederle, unseen save for a brief moment of memory, is an object. However, the monomyth's rigid stereotypical roles dissolve once the second volume begins not with a continuation of Morgon's quest but instead with Raederle's quest, seen from her point of view. She is no longer object but subject, the hero of her own quest first to learn the truth of what happened to Morgon, and then, once she knows of Morgon's fate, to learn her own true identity and to develop her own power-within in order to further help Morgon in his quest. In Raederle's quest, Morgon is the initial object of value; no longer the active subject hero through whose eyes the events are related, he is now the passive, at first unseen object, just as Raederle was in the first volume relating Morgon's quest.

But the shifting of functions in this duomyth goes beyond the simple exchange of

subject and object. Once the two characters' quests become one at the surface level in the third volume, Morgon and Raederle take on even more roles in each other's quests. Each acts at times as a helper, a guide and mentor who gives the other advice; each pushes the other to explore their powers even further. Both Morgon and Raederle are reluctant to take each new step in the quest. Morgon's reluctance is due first to his fear that the new identity which he is assuming will replace, rather than enhance, his identity as Morgon, and later because he fears that his growing abilities will be used to harm the people he cares for. It is Raederle who pushes him to learn to play the three-starred harp which he carries on the journey but refuses to play: "When are you going to learn to use that harp? It holds your name, maybe your destiny [. . .] and you have never even shown it to me" (390). Morgon, who has been just as insistent that Raederle overcome her reluctance to learn to change her shape in order to disguise herself during their dangerous journey along the Traders' Road, replies "I'll learn to play it again when you learn to change shape" (390). Like Morgon, Raederle is afraid to take the next step in her quest; she is fairly comfortable at this point in exercising her powers over fire, to shape it into different forms and use it as a weapon in their defence, but she fears the results to her sense of self if she takes on another form.

The pair bicker back and forth along Traders' Road, their squabbles and tense silences reminiscent of any married couple, except for the reasons for the tension. Both recognize the necessity of moving farther along their quests, of accepting the changes in name, heritage, and appearance that are being thrust upon them by destiny, but both fight against that need. They are attacked by shape-changers who may have recognized them,

their horses are stolen, they are haunted nightly by an incompetent harpist whom they cannot find. And through each hot, dusty day and each exhausted night, they argue with each other about her shape-changing and his destiny. At one point, Raederle reluctantly asks Morgon to teach her to change shape, but her fear closes her mind, and the lesson ends before it begins (395). In an attempt to persuade her to be more open to his teachings, Morgon asks “Can you stand it if I tell you a riddle?” and proceeds to relate to her the story of Arya and “a tiny black beast she couldn’t name [. . . that] lived alone with her, dark, enormous, nameless [. . .] while she lived in terror” (397). Arya’s beast is the classic Jungian shadow, the fear suppressed, repressed, hidden in the depths of the psyche. The next night, haunted again by the harpist, reminding Morgon once again that it is his own harp, bearing the mark of his destiny, that truly haunts him, she turns the question back upon him: “Can you bear it if I tell you a riddle?” Morgon answers “no” that night, but much later in their quest, after Raederle has accepted her heritage and learned to shape-change, after Morgon has learned to play his harp but while he still hesitates to take the final step on his journey, she finds him hiding alone in the barren northern wastes, playing his harp, and reminds him of the riddle of Arya. “You never told me how it ended” she says to Morgon, and he finishes the story: Arya died of fear, and the shadow-creature mourned her death for a week, refusing to eat or drink, until it died of grief (479). The story of Arya and her inability to overcome her fear and face a future filled with possible joy rather than disaster is a shared moment between them; Morgon and Raederle each use the same story at different points in their quest to help each other to overcome obstacles and progress further. In acting as a mentor, a helper who guides

Raederle on her quest, Morgon learns valuable knowledge to advance his own quest and answer his own questions. Helping her, he helps himself, another signal that their quests are, at the structural level, one and the same.

Raederle's reluctance to explore the power-within that comes from her birthright as Ylon's descendant stems from her fear that in her quest to learn more about herself and her abilities, she may transform, change shape, into an opponent in Morgon's quest. She learns from Eriel that the shapeshifters who are trying to kill Morgon, who are opposing his quest, are her kin, and the power she uses to defend him and to grow herself comes from them. She fears that in drawing upon this enemy power to change her physical appearance, she will become his enemy. Raederle attempts to explain her fears that she will not be able to distinguish between two forms of power, the power-within that is her own unique talents and abilities, which is the power Morgon encourages her to explore, and power-over, the use of those abilities to dominate and control others:

I'm not running from something I hate, but something I want. The power of that bastard heritage. I want it. The power eating across Ymris, trying to destroy the realm and you — I am drawn to it. Bound to it. And I love you [. . .] the man who must fight everything of that heritage. You keep asking me for things you will only hate. (406)

Raederle believes that she cannot trust herself because she desires a power that she perceives as evil and terrible. She believes that she cannot develop the power-within without also using it as power-over, as do the shape-changers from whom the power originates, and she fears being overcome by their anger and hatred, as almost happens

earlier when she confronts the ghost of Oen in her ancestral hall (343). Charlotte Spivack, in her analysis of the work, sees Raederle's fear as different from Morgon's in terms of the concept of power in their individual quests. She says that Raederle's "fear, unlike Morgon's, does not concern the possible need to assume power over others but rather the potential powers within her own nature" (119). I disagree with this statement, believing that Morgon and Raederle, as they share similar goals, also share similar fears. Both Morgon and Raederle fear developing the power-within because they believe that it will lead to assuming power-over, which neither one wants to do.

But it is because she wants the power and because he trusts her that Morgon begins to realize that there must be something of value in his enemies, that they cannot be all evil. In doing so, he begins to move outside of a perception of difference in a hierarchy of better and worse, of what helps him defined as good and what is outside of him, opposed to him, as evil. In accepting that what he loves, Raederle, shares something with the forces perceived as evil, he moves towards understanding those forces better, to accepting them as having and being something of potential value. Morgon tries to reassure her that her quest for identity, her development of the power-within, will not transform her into something evil, into the villain of his quest, which is her fear. He reassures her that she "is not going to change shape into something neither [. . .] will recognize" (406). He trusts her to be able to control her own power, to be able to exercise power-within without becoming what she fears and hates, those who would exercise power-over.

Morgon also functions as an opponent in her quest, particularly in Pearson and

Pope's concept of the female hero's quest, in that he finds it difficult at times to move outside of a patriarchal way of thinking about women, particularly the object of love. When they encounter each other for the first time in the course of the narrative, Morgon sees Raederle still as the object of his quest, in the limited stereotypical role of the princess-bride. Disguised as a student in the nearly deserted College in Caithnard, Morgon risks discovery by revealing himself to Raederle. "I wanted to look at something very beautiful. The legend of An. The great treasure of the Three Portions. To know that you still exist. I needed that" (316). But by this time Raederle has been through so much on her own quest to find him that she knows it is impossible for her to fulfill that role, no matter how much she loves him. She tells him "I would be that for you, if I could [. . .]. I would be mute, beautiful, changeless as the earth of An for you. I would be your memory, without age, always innocent, always waiting in the King's white house at Anuin — I would do that for you and for no other man in the realm. But it would be a lie" (316). The hero of her own quest as well as the object of his, Raederle opposes his attempts to lock her into one role.

Furthermore, on more than one occasion, particularly early in their travels together, Morgon attempts to protect Raederle, to leave her behind in safety, to deny her the right to take her own risks. He attempts to control her actions, as if he cannot help but continue in old patriarchal habits of perceiving her as an object. Morgon finds it difficult to break out of a traditional way of thinking. He tries to make her wait in safety for his return but Raederle resists his attempts to protect her, forcing him to see her as not only an object under his care but as a subject able to care for herself. Her attempts are

successful, as later in their joint quest he will leave her on her own when necessary, trusting in her abilities to protect herself, to the extent that near the end of their quest, when Morgon has left Raederle alone on the edge of a dangerous battlefield to follow him on her own, her father Mathom comments to him, “You aren’t easy on one another” (542).

Aside from the doubling of the hero into two characters and the shifting of secondary functions between those characters, the duomyth is also marked by a resolution of the two worlds representing elements in opposition by an equal union of these worlds rather than the imposition of a hierarchy of one over the other. This form of resolution often reveals that the two worlds in opposition have never been directly and clearly opposed from the beginning; rather there are ambiguities in the distinctions between them, a blending and blurring of the boundaries. This is certainly true in *Riddle-Master*, where it is difficult to cleanly and simply divide the two worlds into binary pairs. Often the two worlds described as opposed are feminine and masculine, a matriarchal society in conflict with a patriarchal society. Sometimes a narrative world is constructed in a way that makes it simple for the reader to distinguish between the two types of society; sometimes this is not so.

Certainly there are two worlds clashing in *Riddle-Master*: the wizards, the long-lived land-rulers, the High One, the shape-changers: all are part of the old world, the old social order. This old order is for the most part a patriarchal society; most of the positions of power — the land-rulers, the wizards, the masters of the College — are held by male characters. If all of these positions were held by males, then it would be simple for the

critic to declare it patriarchal, but there are enough strong female characters holding positions traditionally considered masculine to complicate the matter. At no time is it stated by any character in the text that a woman cannot be a ruler or a wizard or even a riddle-master, that a woman is not allowed to hold positions of power. Raederle has received more education in riddle-mastery than her eldest brother who is her father's heir, the Morgol receives the same respect given to the male land-rulers, as do her mostly female guard, and Nun is named a wizard rather than a witch, the more conventional nomenclature for female magic workers.

The usual reading of the hero's quest as a monomyth can lead to critical interpretations of the resolution of the two worlds in simplistic and overgeneralized terms; it is all too easy to fall into the trap of imposing a hierarchy on elements in opposition, and it is easier to impose a sense of value, of better or worse, superior or inferior, for each half of the pairing if a clear and unambiguous distinction can be made between them. This can lead to a reading of a text in which the valuing of the oppositions is imposed by the critic rather than suggested by the elements of the text itself. Consider, for example, a few of the comments made by Rita Haunert in her analysis of Raederle's quest: "Raederle is encouraged and guided by other women; she has to fight off entrapment and atrophy from men" (133) and "In this male-dominated culture only something as superficial as a woman's beauty is revered" (121). It is true that Raederle is celebrated for her beauty, and that Lyra, Morgon's sister Tristan, the pig-woman, and the Morgol all play a role as helpers or guides in her quest. It is also true that she sometimes is reprimanded by male characters, or cautioned by them against taking action. However

other male characters encourage her — the male students at the College do not discourage her from entering the rowdier quarters of the city to look for her brother, and Har and Danaan, both centuries-old male rulers and as such potent symbols of patriarchy, provide her with knowledge and guidance. She may be beautiful, but she has also received an education and is recognized for her growing powers of illusion and shape-changing. The world through which Raederle and Morgon move cannot be oversimplified as a society in which all men seek to repress women and view them only as objects; a less subjective critical reading, a reading better supported by the textual evidence and less influenced by cultural assumptions whether or not those assumptions favour the patriarchy, is enabled by the structure of the duomyth, which does not insist on a privileging of one term over another even if the term preferred is being taken out of its usual negative, inferior context, an action which only serves to replace one inferior term with another.

The narrative world created by McKillip is too complex to be overgeneralized as a patriarchal order which will be overturned, replaced by a new, supposedly better way of doing things, which is what it might have become in the hands of a less skilled author. Just as Morgon's assumption of a new name and Raederle's transformation into new physical forms enhance rather than replace their initial identities, so too does the society in which they live become enhanced as a result of the crisis marked by the High One's death and transfer of power to his heir. The change is not so clear and complete as a sudden denial of patriarchy, or an obvious declaration that the social situation will be drastically different so that even more female characters will assume positions of power. The old society will remain in place, as Har and Danaan, the Morgol and Mathom, the

wizards and the masters of the College, all survive the final battle and return to their homes. However, there are subtle indications that there is a change in the way that power is perceived, as the shape-changers are again confined but not destroyed, and the new High One will be of a different nature.

During this time of crisis, the shape-changers, who are the Earth-masters of an older time, are fighting to regain the old kind of power-over, of mastery over all things. They are willing to use their shape-changing powers to control others, to manipulate the social order of the realm by disrupting the passage of land-law as Ylon's father and Eriel both attempt to do, and even to kill others. The Earth-masters, including the High One and the shape-changers pursuing Morgon, "took knowledge from all things [. . .]. We did not realize, until it was too late, that the power inherent in every stone, every movement of water, holds both existence and destruction" (550). This is a common theme in works of fantasy, that power in itself is ethically neutral and becomes good or evil only when used by human actors to reach positive or negative outcomes. And it is only through human perceptions, shaped by sociocultural axiologies, that good or evil, positive or negative, can be determined. Power simply is, a force in balance. It can be used to dominate, to master others, or it can be developed in oneself, as a force for understanding and developing a stronger and more mature sense of identity, an understanding of the world with which to make responsible choices. The shape-changers see power in only one way, as a way to gain mastery, as the High One, once revealed, explains to Morgon and Raederle:

The woman you know as Eriel was the first of us to begin to gather power. And I

was the first to see the implications of power [. . .]. So, I made a choice, and began binding all earth-shapes to me by their own laws, permitting nothing to disturb that law. But I had to fight to keep the land-law, and we learned what war is then [. . .]. We destroyed one another. We destroyed our children, drew the power even out of them. (550)

The High One fights to ensure that all things are ordered by themselves, allowed to live or die by their own power-within, while the shape-changers are willing to risk chaos and further destruction in order to be able to continue to exploit the power of others for their own purposes. All along, the shape-changers are willing to kill Morgon to prevent him from taking up the responsibility for order, for exercising the power-within himself to ensure that others have the same opportunity; in his final victory over them, Morgon refuses to “destroy[] them, strip[] them of their power, as they had tried to do to him. But something of their beauty lingered in Raederle [. . .] and he could not kill them. He did not even touch their power” (563-4). Instead, he binds them, as he binds all other things in the realm, allowing them to develop the power-within each of their selves, but not allowing them to use that power to master others. As the new High One, Morgon is apotheosized, taking on the role that Campbell terms “Master of the Two Worlds,” but he does not master. He does not assert a right to power; rather, he takes on the responsibility for power only enough to make certain that others will have the freedom to do the same, to choose to follow their own quests as he and Raederle have followed theirs.

The High One has been seen as a hidden, transcendent figure who imposes order from above. But in the change that marks the resolution of the old and new worlds, the

perception of the role of the High One is also transformed. Where the old High One was unseen, unknown, Morgon, as the new High One, will be known to the world and part of it, a familiar face despite his many transformations of name and appearance. As Har tells him, "Now we can return home in peace, without having to fear the stranger at our thresholds. When the door opens unexpectedly to the winter winds, and we look up from our warm hearths to find the High One in our house, it will be you. He left us that gift" (565). Rather than an unknown and transcendent power imposing order from above, Morgon will be a known and immanent power within the new world.

Also, Morgon will not have to bear the burden of responsibility alone, as did the former High One, the sole authority in the old world. Raederle has also completed the quest for identity, and although her quest is not as fully developed a narrative as Morgon's, nevertheless she has accepted a new birthright and developed the power-within to transform herself and shape her world. She has taken on a new identity, and at the structural level, at least, she is Morgon's equal.

On the structural level, their union symbolizes a wholeness through the elemental forces. A symbol can connect the structural and surface levels of the text and the psychological and social worlds outside of the text, and the four elements have been used as symbols to represent aspects of the hero throughout the work. Raederle is descended from the shape-changers who live in the sea, and her growing ability to understand and identify with her power is demonstrated through her ability to work with and shape fire; Morgon is at first a land-ruler of a farming province, aware through the instincts of land-law of the earth and the roots of growing things, and his growing ability to understand

and identify with his power is illustrated through his mastery of the winds. Thus, as Spivack has also noted (122), their alliance is a symbolic union of the four elemental forces, with a slight gendered twist: at least in neopagan cosmology, air and fire are considered to be masculine elements, earth and water feminine, so that the union of Raederle's association with masculine fire and feminine water, and Morgon's with masculine air and feminine earth is even more symbolic of union and androgyny.

It is not only the relationship between man and woman that is transformed in the duomyth, but all relationships between opposites that are commonly seen as hierarchies of authority. The real problem with the relationship between male and female in the monomyth is that the balance of power between the two is unequally distributed. The male assumes a position of dominance, the female a position of subservience, rather than the two interacting in a relationship based on equality. But all relations involving power dichotomies are transformed in *Riddle-Master*: master/servant, teacher/student, ruler/subject, predator/prey. The High One, the transcendent wielder of justice and the unseen ruler of the realm, acts as servant to Master Ohm, obeying his orders even though he could easily command Ohm's will. In his guise as the wizard Yrth, he takes the shape of the hawk, the hunter, but acknowledges that he has also taken the shape of the hare, the hunted, in his time. Morgon and Raederle also take on different shapes, experiencing and understanding the nature of being different, of being in forms considered superior or inferior. It is not only the husband/wife relationship that is seen as a relationship of equality, or even all gendered relationships; the entire system of binary oppositions is altered to remove the element of hierarchy, although difference is certainly not denied nor

erased, simply transformed.

While the duomyth is resolved by an equal union at the structural level, it must be acknowledged that at the surface level the resolution of Raederle's quest for identity is still problematic in terms of her social role, her status within the community, which is another response to the question of identity. Morgon is recognized as the High One's land-heir, as the new High One, but what is Raederle's social status? She has a new name: the High One's wife, rather than Mathom's daughter. Her social status is still defined by her relationship to a male figure in her life, rather than by any meaningful work accomplished in her own right. Her quest for identity has been successful to the point of developing an inner sense of a unique self, in possession of talents and abilities and able to freely make responsible choices for herself about how to lead her life. But to answer the question "Who am I?" with more than a name, a face, and a birthright, to respond in terms of a place within the larger world dependent on more than a connection to a man, is another crucial stage in the female hero's quest to be whole.

The quest for self-knowledge is only the beginning of the quest for identity, although it is an essential stage, as the female hero cannot truly find a place in the world and define relationships with others until she has this knowledge, and can acknowledge both her strengths and weaknesses and take responsibility for her choices. Only then can she continue on the quest for a way to integrate this self with the rest of the world.

Chapter 4 - The Quest for Community in *The Forgotten Beasts of Eld*

[L]ooked at from a different perspective, these stereotypes [of masculinity and femininity] reflect a conception of adulthood that is itself out of balance, favoring the separateness of the individual self over connection to others, and leaning more toward an autonomous life of work than toward the interdependence of love and care. (Gilligan 17)

In *Riddle-Master*, McKillip begins the tale of the joint quest of the male and female hero by first relating the quest of the male hero according to the common structural pattern of the monomyth. In an earlier work, *The Forgotten Beasts of Eld*, she does not use this device. In fact, throughout the work, the point of view is clearly that of Sybel, the female hero. In this work, which might be considered a “menarche” fantasy, or a young female’s coming-of-age narrative, Sybel is a young wizard who lives alone in her mountain home except for the powerful and legendary animals whom she holds under her control. Her solitary life, and her search for an elusive creature, the white bird called the Liralen, is interrupted once by a young warrior who brings her an infant to raise, the son of an aunt whom she has never known, and again twelve years later when the warrior returns for the young boy, the son of the ruling King. The warrior, Coren, leaves without the boy, who returns to the city to live with his father, but pledges himself to come to Sybel when she is in need. Her connection to the young prince brings her to the attention of the King and of Coren’s brothers, who all see her as a valuable asset in their battle for political power. The King enlists the aid of another wizard to rob Sybel of her power, to render her meek

and submissive, a suitable Queen. Sybel escapes this fate but embarks upon a quest for revenge, marrying Coren and, unknown to him, secretly providing his brothers with magical aid in their war. When Coren eventually learns the truth, he questions Sybel's motivations for marrying him. Admitting that she herself is uncertain of her love for him or for anyone else, she flees Sirle after facing the Blammor, the fear that kills, and freeing her animals from her control. As a final gift, the freed animals disrupt the coming battle; with Sybel's magic hindering rather than supporting the Sirle brothers' bid for power, and with the Blammor causing the death of Drede the King which makes young Tamlor the new King of Eldwold, the land itself is transformed, and Sybel chooses to return with Coren to his home in order to begin a new life together.

Unlike Raederle, Sybel begins her quest with the beginnings of an identity, a strong sense of a unique private self. This is reflected in what is missing from the text: the usual markers of identity confusion. There is no shapeshifting or use of masks to suggest transformations of appearance. Further, Sybel knows her bloodline at least as far back as her great-grandfather; her tale begins with the narration of her ancestry, beginning with the wizard Heald and ending with her father, Ogam, and her mother, the daughter of a great lord and sister of a Queen, taken by Ogam as an unwilling wife who dies in childbirth (7-9).

Not only does Sybel not lose her name through amnesia or destiny, in the world of Eld a name is more surely than usual an emblem of selfhood and identity. The name is the self, and to take someone's name gives power over that person. When Drede comes to claim Tamlor as his son, he ritually asks Tam to give him his own name, and the name

of his mother, and finally of his father. In this way Tam acknowledges his parentage, his identity, and also is bound to Drede (58). Sybel uses this power to take and hold the names of the fantastic beasts called by her father and grandfather; later in the text, another wizard, Mithran, calls her in a similar fashion, and knowing her name and what that name signifies of her inner self gives him power over her.

So Sybel begins with a strong sense of self, of her name and her own power-within, her talents and abilities. Known to others in the kingdom of Eldwold only as the “wizard woman on Eld Mountain” (12) she knows her own abilities and has work to do which is meaningful to her but has no understanding of the importance of relationships with others; that is, her power-within serves only her own needs, not the needs of the community. As she tells her neighbour, the witch Maelga, at their first meeting, “I do not understand loving and hating, only being and knowing” (20). She can answer the question of identity “Who am I?” with a name and a birthright, but she lives in isolation from the rest of the world, from other people, and so does not yet understand the emotional relationships between people. Until Coren leaves a baby at her doorstep, forcing her to seek out Maelga for help in raising the child, Sybel has no relationships except with her distant and now-dead father and the animals in her care. Without meaningful work and relationships with others, Sybel does not have a public sense of self; therefore her identity is incomplete. She has a well-developed private self, but an undeveloped public self.

Annis Pratt notes this distinction between the private and the public in her analysis of the female hero’s quest. In her version of the monomyth, Pratt describes two worlds as separate and opposed: the green world of nature, which is the private and

solitary world of the young female hero and the retreat to which the mature hero can escape, and the patriarchal enclosure of society, the public world in which the female hero is trapped by her service as wife and mother. Charlotte Spivack crystallizes this disjunction between the private and the public in Sybel's quest when she summarizes the story as Sybel's "inward struggle between her wizardly power in isolation and her new involvement in the affairs of men" (113). Pratt's archetypal pattern is clearly evident in this text, and can lead to insightful analysis, as demonstrated by Rita Haunert in her dissertation. Therefore, I will refer to Pratt's work often in this chapter.

In Eldwold, the green world is Sybel's garden on Eld Mountain, an isolated mountain, where Sybel lives behind barred gates in a white house in a garden, along with her books and her animals. Eld Mountain overlooks the rest of the country of Eldwold, a patriarchal world ruled by a King beset by the sons of a rival house, torn by war, by the games played by warriors who desire the highest place of power in their world, the throne. As such, Eldwold is much more a patriarchal world than is Hed, for in Eldwold there seems to be little place for women. The only ruler mentioned is Drede the King; if he were defeated, the eldest of the Sirle lords would take his place. Aside from Sybel, the other wizards mentioned are male, and although Sybel possesses power that is recognized by others, she lives in isolation and does not initially have a role to play in the public world of Eldwold.

When she does begin to interact in that world, her defined role is to be wife to a man who holds political power; Drede, recognizing not only the usefulness of her power in his battles to defend his status but also her resemblance to his dead and betraying wife

Rianna, her mother's sister, offers to make Sybel a Queen, which is in his eyes the highest honour a woman can be given (57). Sybel would be Drede's third Queen; the first, Rianna, died in childbirth, and the second, not even named, just as Sybel's female ancestors, the mothers of her wizard father and grandfather, are not named, died childless. Not only are the women of Eldwold limited to the roles of wives and mothers, they are also restricted in how they fulfill those roles. Sybel's own mother was given no choice, as Ogam called her to him in the same manner as he called and captured the fantastic animals in his collection. Rianna also was not free to choose where to love; her love for Norrel of Sirle was a betrayal of the man she was married to rather than a free choice that she was allowed by her society to make. And when the Sirle Lords daydream of allying themselves to the future King by marrying one of their daughters to Tamlorn, there is no indication that the girl will be asked for her consent (141). Further evidence of the low status of the women in Eldwold is provided by Coren, when he tells Sybel that a girl-child born in Tamlorn's place would have been no cause for concern, no threat to the throne of Drede, valueless in the wargames of the Sirle Lords except as a possible wife to a future king (13).

Pratt not only separates the public and private worlds through which the female hero moves; she also separates the male characters who play a part in the hero's tale into two male figures who inhabit each world and represent differing views on the role of the female hero. In the green world, the male figure is the green-world lover, a masculine principle supportive of the young female hero's development of a private self, and sometimes calling the mature hero who is of no further use to the patriarchy back to the

strength and safety of the green world. The other male figure, the rapist-husband, representing the masculine principle of patriarchal society that dominates and suppresses the female hero, is a disruptive force who forces the hero out of the green world using violence and aggression, and traps her within the patriarchal enclosure of the public world.

In Sybel's world, it is fairly easy to identify the rapist figure, as Drede the King pays the wizard Mithran to force Sybel from her mountain garden and into submissive service. However Coren, the man whom Sybel marries, although at times an unquiet force in her life, is not the rapist; nor can he be easily categorized as the green-world lover, who is a source of escape from society for the female hero; he is connected to the green world which is the hero's private domain and safe haven, her garden outside of the patriarchal public world. Coren is certainly not a source of escape for Sybel; he is the disruptive influence that brings the concerns of the public world into her private green world, first when he brings her the young prince, again when he comes to tell Tam about his heritage, and finally when he brings her out of her solitude to return to a changed public world in the end. Also, the green-world lover is not usually a constant companion in the female hero's life, but rather a stage through which she must pass, a transitional element in her quest journey (Pratt 140), similar in many ways to the encounter with the temptress figure in Campbell's monomyth. In the duomyth, the male character is equal to the female hero even when she is the viewpoint character and the main focus of the narrative. Although the point of view in this text belongs to Sybel alone, without the alternating voices that characterized the duomyth in *Riddle-Master*, there are enough hints to conclude that

Coren is more than a passing stage in Sybel's quest; he is a questing hero in his own right. His arcane knowledge of Sybel's animals is at least equal to her own; he admits that his warrior-brothers find his wanderings around Eld and his interest in secrets and ancient lore to be strange. Just as Sybel is marked as special, being the daughter of a wizard, so too is Coren, the seventh son of a seventh son and thus privy to secret knowledge. Just as Sybel knows things from her studies, so too does Coren know stories and bits of legend that are not told in Eldwold; he has knowledge that is written in one place only, a book to which she has the only key (31). The fact that Coren does know things that only Sybel could know is further evidence that they are doubles, that on a structural level they fulfill one function.

Coren is structurally and thematically connected to the Liralen, which is on the surface the object of Sybel's quest and the symbol of her identity, as Spivack also notes (114). The object of Sybel's quest from the beginning and the first animal in her collection that would be captured by her rather than inherited from her father and grandfather, the Liralen is described as a white bird with trailing wings; Sybel often refers to herself in a way that makes clear her connection to the white bird, as when she tells Mithran that "[t]here is a part of me, like a white-winged falcon, free, proud, wild [. . .] if you kill that white bird, I will be earthbound" (98). The implication of such textual clues is that the white bird, the Liralen, is intended as a symbol of Sybel's identity as a whole human being, an identity which she has not yet fully achieved but which she possesses in part, even at the beginning of her narrative quest.

The Liralen's connection to Coren is made clear in the repeated fact that when

Sybel calls the Liralen, Coren appears on her doorstep. The very first time that she reads of the Liralen and begins to call for it, she is interrupted by Coren's arrival at her gate, bloody from the battle in which Drede the King has killed Coren's brother Norrel as retribution for his adulterous relationship with Drede's Queen. Later, when Sybel calls the Liralen and instead encounters Blammor, the fear that kills, which proves to be the shadow side of the Liralen and thus of Sybel herself, Coren again arrives at her doorstep, and survives, as she had earlier that day, an encounter with Blammor (71); in the course of the narrative, only the two of them are able to survive the battle with the shadow, an encounter that proves fatal to both Drede and Mithran. This would seem to be another clue that at the structural level Sybel and Coren are two halves of one hero. Finally, after Sybel has fled Sirle to return alone to Eld Mountain, after freeing her animals, she calls again for the Liralen and again Coren answers, at which time she realizes the Liralen's connection to Blammor. In Sybel's quest for identity, Coren is as much a symbol of that identity as the Liralen/Blammor; he is the object of value in her quest.

It seems clear that one interpretation of the Liralen and Blammor is that they are in a binary opposition as the self and the shadow, in its Jungian conception as the qualities of the human animal that are repressed so that the individual can exist comfortably with others in society (Le Guin 54). The opposition between the two is made clear in the physical descriptions of the two creatures: the Liralen is a white bird, as white as Sybel's ivory hair, and the Blammor is described as a dark creature, "a shadow in the shadows, a black mist taller than [Sybel], with eyes like circles of sightless, gleaming ice" (62). Similarly, the white bird's eyes are "the Blammor's, [. . .] moon-clear" (207). Rita

Haunert connects the physical descriptions of the Liralen and Blammor explicitly to Sybel herself: “With her flowing white hair and her piercing black eyes, Sybel symbolically is the Liralen/Blammor” (22).

If Blammor symbolizes the shadow of the self, which it clearly does, it remains to determine just what it is that is repressed in the creation of that shadow. One possibility is connected to the conception of power in McKillip’s work, to the distinction between the power-within that is good and necessary to the growth and development of selfhood and the power-over others, the use of power to exploit and dominate others so that they are not free to grow and develop into whole individuals in their own right.

Charlotte Spivack, in commenting upon the “renunciation of the power principle in politics” as a central theme in much feminist fantasy fiction, including McKillip’s, hints at but does not expand upon these two distinctions:

Frodo [Tolkien’s hero] undertakes a quest to destroy the ring of power because the ring has been forged by a quintessentially evil figure. Power is the legitimate aim of other major figures representing the good. The aims of power-seeking are fulfilled in several ways that are positive in context [. . .]. These goals are regarded as good ones. In contrast, in many of the fantasies written by women, the *desire* for power is denounced as a principle. (10)

But the reasoning here is circular; Sauron’s ring of power is evil because he is evil, while Aragorn’s desire for kingship is good because he is good. It is too simplistic and certainly not entirely accurate to say that female heroes do not desire power, because they do. The confusion here is caused by a failure to distinguish between the two kinds of power, one

of which is desirable, the other not. Sauron's ring is used to control others, to dominate their wills so that they cannot freely choose for themselves, and this desire to use power to master others, to control and dominate other creatures, is what makes Sauron evil. But power can be considered essential to the growth and development of an individual's sense of selfhood as a whole and mature person, capable of continuing to grow and to help others to do the same. This is the power-within the self, springing from the hero's understanding and acceptance of his or her own unique talents and abilities, and enabling the hero to exercise free will, to make responsible choices.

The word "responsible" is essential to the distinction between power-within and power-over. As has been noted earlier, it seems futile to attempt to deny that there is a difference between individuals; it also seems pointless to deny that in some relationships, the power shared by two individuals is not always equal from the beginning. A student, for example, is less mature, less confident in his or her competence, than the teacher. A child needs the guidance of a parent in order to grow into a mature individual with a unique sense of self. The hero who has been fully successful in the quest for identity and is a mature, whole self also must accept the responsibility to exercise power in order to ensure that others will have the same opportunities to grow, as did Morgon and Raederle in *Riddle-Master*.

The line between the responsibility to use power-within to guide and protect others and the right to use power-over to control others is not always easy to demarcate. The parent or teacher who does not allow the child or student any freedom to make mistakes, to make choices based on free will, is verging on mastery and domination rather

than responsible guidance. This is the power principle which authors such as McKillip renounce in their narrative worlds. For Sybel, the Liralen represents freedom, to fly, to exercise her wings and continue to grow in her talents and abilities, which explains its representation as a “great white bird with wings that glided like snowy pennants unfurled in the wind” (10), a bird that would be caged by Mithran in his desire to exercise mastery over Sybel’s mind. Conversely, Blammor is associated with fear, but a very specific kind of fear. When Drede first visits Sybel and sees how the great falcon Ter obeys her, he admits to her that he is “always a little afraid of those I have even that much power over” (50). Similarly, the wizard Mithran, who uses his power to call Sybel and hold her against her will, fears Blammor so much that, knowing its connection to the Liralen, he could not take the Liralen when he had the opportunity to do so: “I wept at the flight of the Liralen and the knowledge that though I might have power over all the earth that one thing of flawless beauty was lost to me” (95). To understand the Liralen, Mithran would also have had to accept Blammor, the shadow, as both creatures are two parts of a whole being. In order to accept Blammor without injury, Mithran would have to confront and abandon his desire to dominate and possess others. Both Mithran and Drede are horribly killed in their encounters with Blammor, while Coren and Sybel, in her first meeting with the shadow, escape untouched. In her final encounter with Blammor, as she lies sleepless next to the husband whom she has deceived and exploited, Sybel knows fear for the first time, and understands, as Mithran and Drede could not, that the only way to recover her sense of self is give up her desire for power-over. She abandons the war of revenge which she has initiated against Drede, and even goes so far as to set free the creatures which she has

held bound by their names since her childhood, casting aside even this vestige of power-over.

In the earlier discussion of the duomyth in *Riddle-Master*, we saw that one of the markers of the duomyth is that the quest of the male and female characters is shared, indicated by a coinciding of helper figures. In Morgon and Raederle's joint quest, both Lyra and Astrin Ymris fulfilled similar functions as helpers to each character, indicating their position as helper to the hero at the structural level. Similarly, one marker of Sybel and Coren's joint quest for identity and love is the parallels drawn between their helpers, analogues of the unconscious. For Sybel, these helpers are the animals which her father and grandfather have called and which she now controls: Ter Falcon, the Lyon Gules, the Black Cat Moriah, the dragon Gyld, the Black Swan, and Cyrin Boar. For Coren, these helpers are his brothers, originally six until Norrel's death. In several passages, Coren's brothers are described in terms that make their parallels to Sybel's animals very clear; the eldest brother Rok is called the Lion of Sirle, Ceneth has "sleek black hair and cat-calm eyes" (141), Eorth is slow-witted, "his hair bright gold, his eyes green as Gyld's wings" (116), and Bor, aside from the homonymic name, has "taut silver hair" (116) like boar's bristles. The deliberate similarity between the number and description of the helper figures is most likely intended as an indication that Sybel and Coren are, at some level, the same.

Aside from sharing helpers, they share the same character as opponent to their quests: Drede. At their first meeting, Sybel does not know love or hate, but Coren seeks revenge against Drede, feeling such a hatred for his brother's killer that he requires more

than Drede's death — "his power, and his hope, then his life" (36). Later, he gives up his search for revenge, his hatred, because he believes that his desire for revenge is an obstacle in his quest for Sybel. His surrender of hatred and revenge occurs, unknown to him, at the same point in the narrative that Sybel adopts this same goal as her own; she seeks revenge against Drede, whom she now hates, because of his attempt to rob her of her identity and turn her into a meek and controlled wife. Later Sybel also gives up her quest for revenge, as Coren did before her, and it is only then that the two of them can celebrate the successful achievement of their joint quest for love. Thus not only do they shift their functions between hero, helper, and object in each other's quests, but they also share a structural narrative pattern.

Sybel and Coren also share qualities of the opponent in each other's quests. The male character's tendency to act, at least initially, within the constraints of patriarchal society by viewing the female hero in a stereotypical manner means that he is, in a sense, an opponent to her quest to achieve a free and whole sense of identity. When Coren meets Sybel for the first time, it is because he has been ordered by his brother to give the infant that they believe to be their brother's son into her care, as the child's mother's kinswoman. Sybel is only sixteen at this point in the story, and Coren probably not much older, with little more experience of women than she has of men. His masculine role is further demonstrated by his wearing of armour, and his desire to fulfill his task and return to the battlefield of Terbrec. He does not really see Sybel at first, but rather the woman who meets the description of the child's kinswoman, as his first words to her are to confirm her heritage as "the daughter of Laran, daughter of Horst, Lord of Hilt" (11), thus

placing her in the usual women's role in Eldwold. He is impatient with Sybel's lack of practical knowledge, startled that she does not know the name of the man who has been king for fifteen years, and annoyed by her confusion about his claim that the child is Norrel's son when he has just told her that the child's mother was married to another man. He does not want to leave the child in the care of such a cold and ignorant girl, but feels that he has no choice but to obey his uncle's command, even when he is confronted with the surprising notion, to him, of a young woman with no knowledge of how to care for a child. "You are a girl. You should know these things" he tells Sybel "because you will have children someday and you — will have to know how to care for them" (14). He can see Sybel only in the light of the role allowed to her within his patriarchal society, as the mother of children, and believes that somehow, despite her isolation, she should have some natural knowledge, some inborn competence in the care and nurture of small children. At least until he comes to know her better, Coren is opposed to Sybel's quest.

Similarly, in Coren's quest, Sybel serves as an opponent. He surrenders his need for revenge against Drede in order to be worthy of her love, not knowing that she has taken up that need for revenge and that her decision to marry him is, at least in part, motivated by her plan to gain control over Drede and make him fear her. Sybel offers her power to aid Rok, Coren's eldest brother and the Sirle patriarch, to take the throne away from Drede, on the condition that Coren not be told of her involvement. When Coren stumbles onto the truth and confronts Rok and Sybel, she uses her magic to remove from his mind the memory of the discovery, using the same power in the same way as Mithran would have used it to take away her free will and sense of self at Drede's command (160).

She acknowledges this, and that such an action is something “no one should do, in either love or hate” (160), but she does not immediately confess to Coren, nor does she abandon her goal. After he learns of the plan again, overhearing two of his brothers in the stable, he begs her to give up her desire for revenge, for mastery over Drede, as he has done for her sake, but she refuses, even admitting to him that she is not certain of her reasons for marrying him. In taking from him some of his memories and thoughts, and in hurting him emotionally, Sybel takes on the role of opponent or villain, a bearer of pain rather than of happiness.

Coren acts as a catalyst in Sybel’s quest, disrupting her solitude and encouraging, sometimes forcefully, her movement into the public world. However, his actions in doing so do not fit the category of rapist-husband. In Sybel’s quest, that function is filled by two other characters, as the function of rapist is split between Drede, who wishes to make Sybel his third Queen, and Mithran, the wizard paid by Drede to render Sybel meek and submissive. Drede would make Sybel his wife by raping her of her free will, although he does not perform the actions himself; Mithran would both rape her body and take away her right to make her own choices as an individual with a unique identity. As the green-world lover supports the female hero’s attempt to remain in the solitary and private world of nature, the rapist acts to forcibly remove the hero from that world and initiate her into the social world of the patriarchy. At a structural level, and sometimes even at the surface level of a text, Pratt does not distinguish between the rapist and the husband. She says, of the female hero’s being forced into a marriage after “seduction” or for reasons of finance, that “[t]he event of ‘rape,’ in that it involves the violation of the self in its psychological

and physical integrity, thus becomes central to the young woman's experience even if she is to be bedded down legally, within a marriage" (24-5). This suggests that the female hero can possess a unique sense of self only if she remains isolated in the green world, and that the cost of movement into the public world, into relationships with men, is always marked by her submission to the male partner.

Sybel is forced to leave the green world of her garden on Eld Mountain, to leave Coren sleeping by her fire in a vain attempt to protect her, as Drede pays Mithran to symbolically rape Sybel of her identity by turning her into a truly submissive and devoted wife, and Mithran himself gives in to his lust for Sybel and attempts a physical rape of her body. In Mithran's tower in the King's city of Mondor, Sybel begs Drede for her identity, for her selfhood, promising him everything he wants if only she is allowed to remember who she is, to be able to answer the question "Who am I?" She kneels before him and says "I will do whatever you ask. I will marry you. I will put the Sirle lords under your power. I will raise Tam, and I will bear you sons. I will never argue with you; I will obey you without question" (98). In other words, she promises to be the perfect patriarch's wife, completely under his command, if only he allows her to keep some remnant of her own identity. She will choose to cage the "white bird" that symbolizes her inner self, her power-within, but Drede refuses to allow her even that much power. He fears those that he has power over, even though he holds the topmost position of sociopolitical power within his world, and he fears even those that he believes he loves. His power-over is based only on that position, on his identity as a male and as a leader; he feels no sense of power-within, and so he is insecure.

Mithran, however, has confidence in his own personal power, in the power-within gained, as Sybel's has been gained, through knowledge and self-discipline. He does not fear Sybel, because he knows that his power, like hers, enables him to control, to master others, as Drede's political power does not. He can leave her identity intact, because he holds her name, the key to her identity, and so she can do nothing without his permission and will always have to come when he calls. Sybel can choose to serve Drede willingly, in exchange for her inner freedom; Mithran will grant her inner freedom to know her own mind, but he will take away her power to choose. The woman's ability to choose, and the man's fear that her choice might not be in his favour, is at the very core of the act of rape. Mithran makes this very clear when he tells Sybel of his long desire to possess her: "If I had come to you in your mountain house, you could have said yes to me as easily as no. Today, though, I think there is only one answer you will give me [. . .]. If I must take you by force, I will, though with such a choice that you face today, I doubt that you will argue" (101). The only choice that he is willing to give her is between himself and Drede, between becoming Drede's pawn/Queen and becoming Mithran's caged bird. For Sybel, the choice is no choice at all: "Drede will have me helpless and smiling, or you will have me helpless and afraid" (102). Mithran, attempting to seduce her with promises of the wealth and power she will gain through her relationship with him, assaults her physically, tearing her clothing, but in doing so he briefly loses his control over her mind. Sybel calls upon Blammor, the fear that kills, and Mithran is destroyed, just as Drede will be in the end. Sybel's use of her power to kill Mithran, although it seems justified as an act of self-defence, nevertheless has serious consequences; this is a turning point in her quest, a

backward step in a sense, as until this point she has been committed to developing her own abilities and not interfering with others: “I have made difficult choices, but always my own freedom to use my power serving my own desires, harming no one, has been my first choice” (94). After Mithran’s death, she makes the choice to use her power, and Coren’s love for her, to master Drede, to make him fear her, to take his power and then, possibly, his life.

The rape-trauma archetype can be traced in other works of the fantasy genre by women writers, but it is not as common an archetype in fantasy as in realistic fiction.¹⁶ The rape-trauma archetype, although it is real for Sybel and a key moment in her quest, simply is not as prevalent in fantastic fiction, possibly because the duomyth provides for a more positive relationship between male and female, more equality meaning less dominance; rape, after all, is a demonstration of power rather than an expression of desire. Because fantastic fiction is the product of techniques that reshape the elements perceived in the sociocultural world, elements that are negative, such as the prevalence of physical rape of women by men who wish to exercise absolute power over them, can be subtracted from the narrative world in order to present a more idealized world in which women do not need to fear such a loss of selfhood, of power-within.

¹⁶ For instance, the rape-trauma archetype is not present in either of the other two works under discussion in this thesis. It might be possible to make an argument that Rois’ entangling in the rose vines at the well in the wood is a symbolic rape; it might also be possible to make a similar argument about Master Ohm’s threat to hold Raederle hostage for Morgon’s good behavior. However, that would seem to be a forced interpretation, of the sort that Annis Pratt herself warns against when she points out the need to induce archetypes from an analysis of literary works, rather than to “deduce categories down *into* a body of material”(5).

Pratt claims that the rape-trauma serves to force the female hero out of the green world and into the patriarchal enclosure of marriage. Thus in her model, the rapist and the husband serve the same structural purpose, to enclose the female hero within the social system. But in Sybel's case, it is not Mithran or even Drede, the rapist figures, who becomes her husband and leads her into the patriarchal enclosure. Instead, it is her seeming green-world lover, Coren. Sybel marries Coren immediately after her encounter with Drede and Mithran, and she does leave her green world for Sirle, which symbolizes the patriarchal enclosure, inhabited by males who talk of war and women who care for children. Sybel's animals are also enclosed and tamed when they come to Sirle, symbolizing her own "descent [. . .] to domesticity and turmoil" (Spivack 114).

But the sense of enclosure within the patriarchy is weakened in a number of ways. Sybel spends more time planning war with the men of the house than she spends with the women; in fact, she is not described as performing feminine tasks except as a cover for her work of mind-control, sitting quietly in the corner with her needlework as she manipulates the Lords of Eldwold (156). She is not commanded by the patriarch of the family to go sew with the women; he acknowledges her power of magic and is more than willing to exploit it to achieve his own desire for political power and position. The enclosure of the female hero in the patriarchy suggests that she will play a feminine role, determined by a switch to feminine tasks from the freedom enjoyed by the young female hero. However, Sybel does not take up a role defined by traditional feminine tasks. She does needlework only as a subterfuge to mask her true work of using her powers to control the minds of those warrior-lords invited by Sirle to betray their previous

allegiance to Drede and support Sirle in the coming war. She has taken on masculine qualities of aggression, so that she is still not in balance until the very end of her quest, after she gives up all practice of power-over and frees even her animals, asking nothing of them.

Sybel nearly succumbs to Blammor before fleeing the enclosure to return to the solitude of her garden on Eld Mountain, just as, in Pratt's version of the monomyth, the female hero departs from the patriarchal enclosure to return to the green world. Sybel's isolated garden is even more solitary at this time than it ever has been in her life, as Tam lives in the city of Mondor and the animals, which have been a part of her life since her birth, have been freed. One might expect that Sybel would remain for the rest of her days behind the locked gates of her garden, disillusioned with her husband and his world, and further developing her own power-within as a crone-figure. But this is not the end of McKillip's tale, as both Tam and Coren journey to Eld Mountain to once again draw Sybel into the public world. Tam informs her of the changes to that world: Drede dead, himself King, the war aborted before it had a chance to begin. Sybel invites Tam to return to Eld Mountain when he feels the need for solitude, for privacy to develop his own self away from the demands of the public world. But she returns to Sirle with Coren once more, to a patriarchy changed in subtle ways by her actions in the larger world.

Sybel's departure from Eld Mountain at the end of the work opens up the structure of the hero's quest, illustrating another defining feature of the duomyth. The various structures of the monomyth are closed structures, allowing for movement in only one direction and thus limiting the hero's choices. Pratt's, like those of Campbell and of

Pearson and Pope, is a closed circle, describing the hero's departure, adventure, and eventual return; the pattern of the Psyche-structure of the fairy tale is linear and unidirectional, an evolutionary progress from beginning to end, an ascent from low to high. This sense of closure further contributes to the monomyth's preservation of the clear distinction between binary opposites. In Pratt's structure, the female hero too young to be of use to the patriarchy can only be free in the green world, and must be trapped within the patriarchal enclosure as long as she can serve a husband and bear sons, returning to the solitary green world only as an old or eccentric crone. The female hero is isolated; she can either be strong in the solitude of the green world, or a slave bound within the patriarchal community. But the structure of Sybel's tale suggests instead the image of the helix or spiral, as described by Robert Kegan (108-9). In his theories of the development of the self, Kegan notes the continuing lifelong movement between "the yearning to be included, to be a part of, close to, joined with" and "the yearning to be independent or autonomous, to experience [. . .] one's individual integrity" (107), what he terms "communion and agency" or "autonomy and inclusion" (108). In other words, the individual, the hero, follows not a linear or circular path on life's quest, but rather a spiralling movement back and forth between the private and public worlds, between the solitude necessary for self-reflection and the community necessary to encourage further growth. Sybel's final movement back to the home of the Sirle lords with Coren negates her withdrawal from the patriarchal enclosure, dismisses the negative ending of her quest for love, and opens the closed circle into an open spiral. If she can leave and then return to the patriarchal public world, if she can return to and then depart from the private world

of her garden, then the boundaries between the two worlds become less defined, the two worlds less opposed.

Although the work ends on her departure from the green world of Eld Mountain, and it is impossible to know whether or not she will remain an equal partner in marriage and continue to develop her own powers, or choose to immerse herself in the role of wife and mother, the suggestion is that throughout her life she will have the possibility of returning to Eld Mountain, to solitude, and of returning again into the world. It is not necessary for the quest to end with her marriage, with her coming-of-age and her discovery of a place, or the lack of a place, in the larger world. She is free to move between reflecting upon and further developing a private sense of self and considering a changing public role in terms of relationships and work. The female hero learns that once she understands a self and that self's place in the larger world, she is better able to find love and to love others.

Chapter 5 - The Quest for Love in *Winter Rose*

“Psyche’s conflict revolves around a struggle between her desire to be both lover and beloved” (Heller 23).

Raederle’s quest was for identity, a sense of a unique self. Sybel possessed such an inner sense of self but needed to find a place within the larger world. Both were able to successfully achieve the quest for love once they achieved their other quests, once they understood better their sense of power-within or their role in the community. But Rois, the female hero of *Winter Rose*, begins her quest for love without a complete understanding of either her sense of self or her place in her community. That her quest for identity has been begun but is not completed is reflected in her immature and uncertain attitude toward love. Once she learns more about the nature of love, and understands better who she is and how she fits into her world, she can move forward on her quest for a whole and mature self capable of sharing that self equally with another.

Winter Rose is part of a subgenre of fantasy which might be termed fairytale fantasy; the texts considered part of this subgenre owe much of their content and structure to the traditional folk or fairy tale, and many of the best known texts are retold classics, in which fairy tales, some popularized by Disney, others less well known, are reenvisioned and recreated for a twentieth-century audience grown accustomed to the stereotypical damsel in distress waiting to be rescued by Prince Charming and living happily ever after the wedding that closes the tale. The process of recreation is an attempt to free the symbols of the fairytale from the rigidity of stereotypes and restore their archetypal

energy. In explaining the difference between stereotypes and archetypes,¹⁷ Thelma Shinn makes a distinction between ancient myth, meaning the stories of the past oral tradition of storytelling, and what she terms cultural myths, the old tales preserved and concretized in written form (x). Ancient myths were told anew “with the particular embellishments of each storyteller, open to the perspective of the present moment” (4). Thus the figures of the ancient myth were archetypal, a recognizable type appearing in new shapes that spoke to the concerns of the contemporary audience. Once those myths are preserved in writing, they become tied to history, to space and time, to the concerns of that present; in becoming cultural myths, the enabling archetypes lose their flexibility, become ossified into rigid and restricting stereotypes. Shinn further distinguishes between cultural myths and what she calls science-fiction myth, which, because “[f]antastic literature is already free from time and geography and capable of encompassing the creative expansiveness of science” (xii) is freed from the restrictions of the cultural myth, its characters and objects once more timeless and flexible archetypes rather than constricting stereotypes. In *Winter Rose*, McKillip plays with the stereotypical expectations of archetypal symbols in an exploration of Rois’ quest for an identity that can include true love only after she understands what true love really means, after she has perceived the truth underlying the

¹⁷ Several critics make useful distinctions between the archetype and the stereotype. Annis Pratt provides the derivations for the words — *archetype* from Greek roots meaning the “primordial form, the original, of a series of variations” and *stereotype*, “a printing term designating the original plate from which subsequent imprints are made and connoting an excessively rigid set of generalizations” (3). Nor Hall refers to the literary critics’ use of the terms when she cautions that “One of the things to hold on to in this exploration is the difference between a *stereotype* and an *archetype*. A stereotype is a stricture where an archetype is an enabler” (33).

stereotyped symbols of the myth of romantic love and rediscovered love as a force enabling the equal union of two mature individuals each free to choose.

In *Winter Rose*, the two worlds are the primary narrative world, where Rois lives with her sister Laurel and their father in a centuries-old farmhouse in a community reminiscent, as are so many fantasy worlds, of a pre-technological historical past, and the magical realm of Faerie, a secondary narrative world not separate from the primary world but lying hidden within it. Laurel is betrothed to marry a young farmer who lives nearby with his aged parents; the farming families do their business and their gossip in the small village community; and on the other side of the woods where Rois loves to wander and gather herbs is Lynn Hall, the deserted manor house of the vanished local aristocracy. Both the woods and Lynn Hall exist in both worlds. In the immortal, unchanging world of Faerie, reached through the mysterious well in the woods and through a tapestry hanging in Lynn Hall, the Faerie Queen and her court live in splendour and beauty, untouched by age, decay, and death. This is the world of the imagination, inhabited by figures both archetypal and stereotypical. This is the world where Pearson and Pope's myth of romantic love is strongest.

Out of this world comes a young man, Corbet Lynn, to reclaim and rebuild his ancestral home; Rois, drinking water from the well one summer day, sees Corbet step out of a beam of light and falls in love with him at first sight. As the seasons pass in the mortal world, Rois realizes that Corbet has fallen in love instead with Laurel, who begins to forget her feelings for Perrin, the man she has long intended to marry, and also falls in love with Corbet. Rois, aware of Corbet's origins in Faerie, and determined to rescue

both Corbet and her sister from the Faerie Queen, learns that the secret to breaking the Queen's hold over Corbet and freeing him to choose his own life and his own love is to take Corbet's hand and hold on to him no matter what physical form he might be transformed into by the Faerie Queen. Although the Faerie Queen offers Rois the opportunity to marry Corbet and live with him in Faerie, Rois sets him free to choose for himself in the mortal world, even though she knows that his choice is likely to be Laurel rather than herself. This freedom to choose is a hallmark of a fully mature self, an exercise of power-within, as is Rois' recognition of her responsibility to allow others a similar freedom of choice rather than use her power to control their decisions.

Where Sybel began her quest in firm possession of a strong sense of self, Rois is more like Raederle, confused about her identity and her place in the world. The narrative signs of her identity crisis include the double meaning attached to her name, Rois. Jessica Greenlee, in her discussion of Rois' divided nature between the angel and the madwoman posited by Gilbert and Gubar, notes that "Rois is named after a natural object, a plant, something that in these fairy tales shows the heroine's passivity" and further that "she is not limited to the quiet, cultivated half" of her personality, as the wildness of her nature is reflected in her self-appraisal of her image as more like a blackbird than a rose (81). In limiting the interpretation of the eponymous symbol to only one aspect of Rois' complex personality, Greenlee has in mind the garden rose or hothouse flower, cultivated by civilized English gardeners for its calm, regal beauty, relegated to carefully tended beds and sensitive to vagaries of weather and insects. However, the rose as a plant is not only the garden or hothouse rose, but can also be the wild rose, growing in bushes in untended

backyards, in fields and on the fringes of the woods, clinging tenaciously to the soil and blooming even in the hottest summers and wettest springs. Rois' name is indicative of her divided nature, but of both sides, not only of the half of her that is confined within her father's home in the dreary winter but also the side that runs free in the woods in all kinds of weather.

Another symbol of identity confusion arises from the hero's learning that his or her birthright or parentage is not as certain as has always been thought, and this is another key element of Rois' quest. As she remembers more about her long-dead mother's visits to the woods, she half-recalls or imagines that her mother went there to meet a lover, leaving the baby Rois in the grass beside the well in the woods, playing with her mother's discarded wedding band. Later, the Faerie Queen confirms Rois' suspicions, telling her that her mother met her woodland lover even before Rois' birth and that the fact that her father is not the farmer but rather one of the Queen's immortal night-riders is the cause of her wildness. Greenlee accepts the Queen's explanation as truth, developing this suggestion that Rois is not fully human as a part of her critical interpretation of the text, but it is important to realize that the Faerie Queen is not the most reliable of narrators; no clear and unambiguous answer to Rois' parentage is provided within the text, and Rois herself decides that it is impossible for her mother to have kept a secret lover for so long, and eventually accepts that the man that she has always considered her father is so (249).

Aside from the ambiguity regarding her sense of self, Rois also begins with an uncertainty about her place in her community. She has spent much of her life roaming the woods, leaving her elder sister Laurel to care for their home and their father. She realizes

that in her world, most women marry farmers and raise farmers' children; another option open to her might be the role of herbwoman, and she does have a sense of meaningful work as she gathers herbs and plants from the woods, some of which she gives to the village apothecary while she brews the remainder into medicinal teas for her family and neighbours. But this work, meaningful as it is to her small community, does not seem satisfactory in its own right. Rather than a life spent in solitary service to others, Rois desires to marry, although she cannot imagine herself married to any of the men that she knows. She feels that it might be pleasant to have a husband, at least in daydreams, but in reality she cannot think of a single man in her community, in the real world around her, who would fulfill her dreams, who would allow her to be herself, part wild and wandering, rather than a domesticated wife. When her father asks how she expects to find a husband without mending her carefree ways, without choosing to sacrifice some part of her personality, Rois' thoughts turn immediately not to any one of the village men, but to the face of the mysterious stranger she has just seen appear in the woods (4); she knows that none of the men with whom she is familiar will understand her wildness, but she can imagine that the unknown man, the stranger she has loved at first sight, might return her passion equally.

Thus Rois' quest focuses primarily on her quest for love, for a relationship with one special other who will accept her as a whole self, including those wild passionate aspects of her nature that set her apart from others. In *Winter Rose*, there are many symbols associated with love and passion. One of the most widely recognized symbols of love is the rose after which the female hero is named. The red rose in particular

symbolizes the passion of lovers as the sweet scent and the beauty of the blossom recall the attractions of true love, the sensual pleasures, while the thorns evoke the sharp pain of disappointment that follows the discovery that the true love is not as exciting as was first imagined. Also, the rose blooms for only a brief time, shortly to wither and fade, as does the love inspired by passion and sexual attraction, or love at first sight.

Aside from the title and the name of the viewpoint character, the symbol of the rose appears in many forms. Rose vines surround the stone well that serves as a passageway between the mortal world and Faerie, hiding it from casual view. These roses change with the seasons, as Rois returns to the well in summer, early autumn when the gold leaves fall, late autumn during the rains, in winter when the rose vines are bare and the water of the well is frozen ice trapping Corbet beneath its surface. There are also references to candles, lamplight, and fire appearing to be burning roses, the fire yet another symbol of passion, quickly blazing then dying into ashes. And Laurel attempts to transform the wild Rois into a more cultured rose for Crispin and Aleria's wedding, dressing her in their mother's rose-coloured gown and braiding roses into her hair like a princess' crown (36). The variety and proliferation of symbolic roses clearly signal that Rois' quest is deeply concerned with finding love, while at the same time signalling the transitory nature of a love arising solely from passion.

As the masculine double to the female hero Rois, Corbet Lynn is also on his own quest for love. In the *Psyche*-structure, where the role of the male figure is to take on the function of Propp's princess-bride, the object of the hero's quest in need of rescue, the male character is locked into the role of the weak and passive object. Such a reading

would seem to be reinforced in a first-person narrative, when the point of view is firmly that of the first person narrator, in this case Rois, the female hero. This would be true in a narrative constructed according to the monomythic Psyche-structure, but *Winter Rose* is a duomyth, and in a few passages in the text either Corbet reveals his quest to Rois or the point of view switches to his, so that the reader is given a glimpse into Corbet's thoughts, feelings, and motivations, providing evidence of his function as the male aspect of the hero.

One such instance occurs when Rois drinks the wine brought by Corbet from his homeland (114-15). Rois already knows at this point that Corbet is not from any place in the mortal world, but if the reader has had any doubts about the reliability of her knowledge, the wine, with its unusual properties, should settle the matter. It is clear that the wine comes from the realm of Faerie, because everyone who tastes it is reminded of a flavour related to a happy memory. For Rois' father, it tastes like hay on a sweet summer day. For Laurel, it is fresh peaches. And Corbet's pronouncement on the taste of the wine would betray his true origins to any regular visitor to Faerie. To him, the wine tastes of golden apples and hazelnuts. Golden apples have long been associated with the gods; they are the fruit of the tree of the Hesperides in Greek myth. And hazelnuts are a symbol of the wisdom of the otherworld in Celtic legends, said to bring special knowledge to any mortal who eats them (Walker 465).

Rois, drinking the wine in a silver cup given her by Corbet, tastes the water of the well in the wood at the height of summer, of roses and wet stone, the way it tasted on the first day that she saw Corbet appear out of the light beside the well. The cup itself is

engraved with roses twining up the sides, and in the wine she sees a reflection of the candlelight, looking like a burning rose, the same burning rose she had earlier glimpsed in the well when the night riders taunted her for wanting Corbet (99-100). Thus the cup becomes an analogue of the well in its function as a passage between worlds, a threshold.

The wine, brought by Corbet from a place of magic, allows for a shift in point of view away from Rois, the first-person narrator of the tale, to Corbet. In realistic fiction, constructed according to the mimetic impulse, such a shift would be considered a flaw in the writing. In the sociocultural world inhabited by author and reader, it is not possible to literally see through someone else's eyes, to perceive the world in the same way as another. Each person is locked into his or her own point of view, and it is a property of realistic fiction that the point of view of the narrator must reflect that limitation. But fantastic fiction allows for such shifts; in science fiction, the conceit of telepathy allows one character access to the mind and perceptions of another. In fantasy, the technique often used is magic, a spell or potion.

Once she has drunk the magic wine, Rois can see the world out of Corbet's eyes. She sees the house, her family, everything around her marked by the decay and aging that is a part of mortality. Rois has to some extent feared mortality, but she learns now that Corbet desires it. In Corbet's perception, Rois' and Laurel's father and Beda, the family cook also present at the dinner, are blurred, indistinct figures, while Laurel appears clear and bright. Rois sees that Laurel is the object of Corbet's quest, that he desperately needs something that Laurel represents to him (117). The magical shift in point of view reveals that Corbet, the object of Rois' quest for love, is on a similar quest of his own.

Rois cannot see herself out of Corbet's eyes, and this limitation in the shift in point of view suggests several alternative explanations. It may be that Rois is so unimportant to Corbet that he does not perceive her, an interpretation that is reinforced by the unreliable Faerie Queen later in the text. It may also be that Corbet does not wish to hurt Rois' feelings by allowing her to see herself, in his perception, as blurred and indistinct, as unimportant, as are her father and Beda, again because the object of his true love is Laurel. It may also be that, despite the fact that the point of view has changed and that Rois is seeing out of Corbet's eyes, it is still her narrative voice controlling the description of what is seen, and she herself may not want to acknowledge the truth of Corbet's feelings. And, finally, it is also possible that it is Corbet who is unable to acknowledge the truth of his feelings for Rois. The ambiguity in this presentation allows for the continuing questions surrounding the nature of Rois and Corbet's feelings for one another up to and even after the end of the text, despite the possibilities of a definite resolution provided by the shift into Corbet's point of view.

Corbet's actions in bringing the wine to Rois, allowing her to learn of his quest and his need for her help, also serve to move him out of the restricted role of gentleman in distress. It is true that he spends much of the narrative waiting for rescue, particularly when he is confined in the Faerie world after the death of his father Tearle, but within the structure of the duomyth, he is able to take more actions on his own behalf than can the male figure of the Psyche-structure, restricted to the passive role of waiting to be rescued. Unlike these figures, Corbet can take some actions on his own behalf, at least so far as to provoke Rois into acting as a helper.

Corbet's need for Rois' help in his quest is made clear at the point when Laurel scolds Rois for prying into Corbet's history, for seeking to learn more about his family's past. Corbet acknowledges that he has his own need to know, his own desire that he cannot fulfill on his own. "Don't you think I am curious, too? And the villagers would never talk to me the way they talk to her [. . .]. It's like being lost in the wood. Everything and nothing points the way toward home [. . .]. I can only do the simple things. Rois sees all the tangled paths" (89). He seeks to learn more about himself, to find a place for himself in the mortal world that will include meaningful work and a loving relationship, and Rois acts as a helper on that quest, finding answers that he cannot. He desires to find the way to a home in the real, mortal world, but cannot do so; Rois' quest among the elder villagers to unriddle the truth of his identity, of his family heritage, aids his quest for the same knowledge.

Rois and Corbet play shifting roles in each other's quests, but at times they do not fulfill those roles in their own surface form as Rois and Corbet, but rather through other surface characters functioning as doubles of the two heroes. Laurel, the surface object of Corbet's quest, is one double of Rois, while the Faerie Queen, the surface villain or opponent, is another; Corbet is doubled in the figures of his father Tearle and grandfather Nial. The technique of doubling is used here to allow Rois and Corbet to explore different possible outcomes to their quest for love.

Laurel becomes a double for Rois in her function as the object of Corbet's quest. Although there are hints, subtle suggestions, that Corbet does desire Rois, his expressed

desires are for her sister Laurel.¹⁸ At first, Laurel is described as the practical sister, levelheaded and capable, keeping things in the household running after the death of their mother, while Rois is a dreamer, wandering around the woods at all hours and in all weather, forgetful of her shoes and her health. At one point, feeling something lacking in herself because Corbet wants Laurel instead, Rois visits Corbet wearing shoes and sensible clothes. Corbet sees through her “disguise” anyway; Rois, returning to the farmhouse soaked and muddy to be greeted by her sister, thinks to herself that “Laurel” looks familiar again (57), although it is not Laurel who has changed appearance, but Rois herself. At another point, distraught upon learning that their mother might have had a lover, Rois straightens furniture and rugs, an unfamiliar behavior for her (207) which echoes her father’s earlier description of Laurel as the “practical daughter” who “works in this house to keep it tidy and comfortable: the chairs always where you expect them, and the cushions never frayed, the carpets straight” (77).

Aside from these narrative hints that Rois and Laurel are, at a structural level, two aspects of one character, there are others that relate more directly to Corbet’s quest for

¹⁸ Often, the roles of female characters in fairy tales are ambiguous; their actions can be interpreted both as opposing the female hero and as helping her to achieve her goals, albeit by forcing her into an untenable position. For instance, in Apuleius’ tale of Cupid and Psyche, it is Psyche’s sisters who lead her to believe that her husband is a monster rather than a god, and encourage her to break his taboo against looking upon him by light. The sisters’ actions can be seen as negative, an attempt to destroy Psyche’s happiness out of jealousy. On the other hand, Huber sees the role of the two sisters as a positive one, in that they are helping Psyche to break free of her submissive role (69-70). A similar ambiguity surrounds the portrayal of Rois’ sister Laurel, who helps Rois and cares for her but at the same time appears willing to steal her man despite her knowledge that her younger sister desperately desires him. Rather than becoming a cause for alienation of the two sisters, an estranging of their relationship, it becomes another source of sisterhood and caring.

love, a desire which he expresses for Laurel when he plays a piece of otherworldly music that causes Rois to long for the beauty and richness of the other world, although Corbet looks at Laurel while he plays the piece. Rois thinks to herself "I would never see that kingdom; that song was not for me" (79). But she has said the same thing earlier about riding with him, on his horse, her hair flowing in the wind, when she sees Laurel riding with him across the field (85). When his father and the night riders come to take Corbet back to the world of Faerie, to that other kingdom evoked by the music, the kingdom that Rois had thought was not for her, she does ride with him just as she had desired. So there is a sense that what Laurel does, Rois also does, and what Corbet feels for Laurel, he also feels for Rois.

Laurel is engaged to a practical man, a man who works hard, cares for his aged parents, and loves her deeply. Rois is alone, afraid that she will never be able to commit to a relationship; in trying to imagine which of the villagers she might be content to marry, she admits to herself "I would never stay where I was not free; I would simply walk out the door and vanish, vows or no" (5). Rois falls in love with Corbet, but it is not Corbet the unique individual that she loves in the beginning; rather it is Corbet the mysterious stranger, associated with an air of magic and mystery and scandal. Laurel has made the sensible choice, while Rois has not. And then, at Crispin and Aleria's wedding, Laurel realizes that she is in love with Corbet. The feeling is slow to develop, or rather to be acknowledged by Laurel although it is obvious to Rois, but the feeling becomes a full crisis after Corbet vanishes. At this point Laurel ceases to eat, wasting away, gazing out of windows, waiting passively for Corbet to return to her. Rois has fallen in love at first

sight, and in the beginning looked to be harmed because of it; she was ill earlier, after being torn by the rose vines at the well, so that Laurel and their father feared that she would follow their mother's example and die of some mysterious wasting illness. But instead it is Laurel who succumbs to the disease of unrequited passion, of "love at first sight" for a mysterious stranger. Her fate clearly illustrates the danger of Rois' choice while still allowing Rois to act as a hero rather than as a passive heroine in waiting.

Laurel, as a double of Rois, provides an opportunity to explore an alternative outcome to Rois' quest for love, what might happen to her if she does not free herself from the myth of romantic love at first sight and instead approach her relationship with Corbet from a position of equality.

The Faerie Queen also seems to be a double of Rois, in her function as an opponent impeding Corbet's quest. Symbolized by the clinging ivy and the predatory owl, the Queen is in sole control over her otherworldly realm. The realm of Faerie, as another archetypal symbol, carries with it certain connotations, qualities ascribed to it in its many incarnations in works of fantasy and in the fairy tales and legends that are their source. The realm of the Faerie Queen is timeless, outside of linear time; in the old tales, seven days may pass while the hero is missing from the real world for seven years. The realm of Faerie is also usually described as inhumanly, impossibly beautiful. Both of these factors are at play in the description of Rois' visit to that world:

Spring, I guessed, seeing a bank of purple violets spilling down into a rill. Then I saw burdock as high as my shoulder, and blue vervain, and yarrow the rich ocher-gold of late summer light. And then I saw leaves as golden as the yarrow [. . .].

The air smelled of violets, crushed raspberries, wood smoke. If I could have dreamed a world to escape the winter [. . .] it would be this timeless nowhere.

(210)

The realm of Faerie, described by many fantasists as a timeless and beautiful place, is ruled in most narratives, as in *Winter Rose*, by a solitary Queen, often portrayed as cold and distant (Ashley 330). The Faerie Queen wants Corbet to remain with her in her realm, allowing him to marry Rois on the condition that they stay in her realm and raise children for her. Corbet's desperate plea for freedom to "build a house, love a woman in the world where things are always dying, and there is never enough time" (143) is met by her refusal: "I will not let you leave me" (146).

The narrative confusion that indicates a structural connection between Rois and Laurel operates to indicate a connection between Rois and the Faerie Queen. One such signal is the confusion in Rois' dreams and memories about her mother's wedding ring, as she recalls both watching the ring fall, which she does as a child when her mother drops it for her to play with, and later when the Faerie Queen drops it by the well, and also being the one who drops the ring (199). Just as the repeated references to roses serve as a symbol of Rois' quest for love and are associated with her, so too does the Faerie Queen become associated with the rose as well as other symbols of love. The roses by the well are wild roses, vines that cling to the unwary and can even rend the flesh, as Rois is trapped within them in her late autumn visit to the well in which she confronts the Faerie Queen and confesses her desire for Corbet (100). In this way the rose vines are similar to the ivy that is associated with the Faerie Queen, covering Corbet and keeping him from

speaking at key moments in the text. The clinging ivy, like the rose vines, is a symbol of a love that clings like the vines, that suffocates whatever is enclosed in its embrace. The Queen loves Corbet, and his father Tearle, but she wants them confined within her immortal world, not free to live as they please and make their own choices in the primary mortal world in which human beings can grow and change. She wants to cling to them, to keep them always the same and always near her, always in her power and control.

Another of the symbols of the Faerie Queen recurring throughout the text is the white owl, as in Rois' vision of the Queen "in a mantle of white feathers that covered her from throat to heel" (195). In itself a strong symbol of identity confusion owing to its haunting call of "Who?" the owl, because of its nature as a night hunter, also carries predatory attributes that become associated with the Faerie Queen. During the wine-induced vision, seen through Corbet's eyes and thus communicating his perceptions, Rois, watching Corbet watch Laurel, sees her own hands become aged claws, like the talons of the owl, and close "like bird-claws around nothing [. . .] my clawed hands held his heart" (119). In narrating her responses to her vision, Rois does not admit to feelings of envy and jealousy, but evoking the imagery of the Queen's symbolic owl is suggestive of a kind of love that victimizes, that preys upon and holds captive. Where Laurel, as the object of the myth of romantic love at first sight for the mysterious stranger, is in danger of losing everything of her identity, becoming nothing more than a submissive victim to the extent that she does not exist at all, the Queen, the subject of a different kind of myth of love as all-consuming, wishes only control, to dominate the beloved. Both are possible outcomes to Rois' quest for love, but neither would be satisfactory; as the object of

Corbet's love, she would be passive, finding life worth living only in his company, while gaining mastery over Corbet as an object of her desire would make him suffer in misery, unable to fulfill his own quest, to make his own choices.

A similar point about the power imbalance in a relationship built on hierarchy rather than union is reflected in Corbet's doubling in his father Tearle and grandfather Nial. The same confusion that marked the doubling of Rois, Laurel, and the Faerie Queen is evident in the treatment of Corbet and Tearle. For instance, when Rois pulls out the rose of love from the well and declares that she wants "him," meaning Corbet, the reply from the Faerie Queen's night riders is that "no one ever wanted him, and so he came to us" (100), to the night riders, to the realm of Faerie. It was not Corbet who escaped to them, but his father Tearle, as a young man, who then raised his son Corbet in the immortal world. Tearle, starved of human love by the absence of his mother and the cold-hearted abuse of his father, desired a world of beauty and did not care that it was cold and heartless; his son Corbet, raised in the world of unchanging beauty, desires the mortal world of warmth and human feeling.

Rois notes of Corbet that he lives among the villagers "as if each action might make him human, as if each wish, spoken, might make itself true. But it was little more than his father had done. . ." (96). The elder villagers tell Rois tales of Tearle and his unspoken desires to be a part of their lives, their community, their mortal world, which his father Nial kept him from. Just as Corbet desires a world of real mortal love, a world in which lovers can feel compassion and warmth, so too did his father, although Tearle abandoned his search in the mortal world and accepted the substitute love offered by the

Faerie Queen in exchange for his devotion and obedience to her. Tearle is willing to accept submission to the Queen, who dominates him to the extent of killing him when he eventually defies her (150).

Nial, on the other hand, serves to illustrate the typical role of the dominant patriarch, exercising mastery and control over his young son to the extent of physically assaulting him when the boy displeases him. Nial treats his son Tearle as a servant, sending him into the bitter winter night to gather wood for the fire, unconcerned that the boy's fingers are numb and frozen. When Tearle tells his father of the night riders who remind him of his mother, Nial causes him to nearly fall into the fire, then orders him back into the cold and dark when he tries to eat (128). Later, when Rois takes Corbet's hand and holds onto him while the Queen transforms him into different shapes — her dead mother, Nial Lynn, an image of Corbet who speaks the Faerie Queen's words — the semblance of Nial twists Rois' arm in an effort to break free of her, and tells her hurtful things about love and Corbet's feelings for her: "I will hurt you if you do not let go of me. Love cowers from pain. Love hides itself. Love whimpers like a dog and runs [. . .]. I am doing this for your own good" (239). Nial speaks of a love that demands surrender, the submission that Tearle gave first to his father and then to the Faerie Queen; like the Queen's, Nial's version of love is one that consumes the other, that demands mastery and domination rather than equality.

The resolution of the two worlds in the Psyche-structure, reflecting its sources in fairy tales, is symbolized by marriage. Rois is given the opportunity to remain in Faerie, to marry Corbet and live "happily ever after" with him, but what would be the cost in the

mortal world, the primary narrative world that is fictional to the reader but real to the characters? She might save Laurel's life, but she would vanish from that life, abandoning her father and sister and community. Although she would be Corbet's wife, there would be no possibility of true love between them, as Corbet would still desire Laurel and would not have achieved his goal of escaping from the immortal world into the real one. The stereotypical fairytale ending to the myth of romantic love would be satisfied by such a marriage, but it would not provide a satisfactory outcome to Rois and Corbet's quest for identity. Neither would be in possession of a unique sense of a mature self able to make choices, as the Faerie Queen would make their choices for them. Neither would be able to function in the community; Corbet's plans to rebuild Lynn Hall, which has employed many of the villagers, would be abandoned, and Rois would be unable to care for her family or to gather herbs for the apothecary. They would have the stereotypical eternal marriage promised by the cultural myth of romantic love without benefit of the enabling and transforming energy of the archetypal symbols.

A common symbol of marriage is the gold wedding band, meant to symbolize the eternal, unchanging nature of married love in its circular shape, without beginning or end. Being made of gold, the medium of exchange and money in many cultures through the ages, it is also a less positive symbol of marriage, representing the selling of daughters into marriage in exchange for financial considerations. These negative associations with the gold band lie behind Annis Pratt's comment on the tendency of authors of realistic fiction to "describe the golden circle of marriage, symbolizing an eternity of mutual love, as a tarnished enclosure" (45), as the glitter of the idealized dream marriage becomes

dulled by the dreary and sometimes brutal reality with which many wives are faced.

Because of its solidity, the ring made of gold is meant to symbolize a love that lasts, but in the world of the Faerie Queen love does not last. In the primary narrative world, as in our own, gold is a durable metal, but according to folk tradition, Faerie gold crumbles into dry, dead leaves in the morning light, as does the gold ring the first morning after the Faerie Queen mockingly drops it in the woods for Rois to pick up (50). The association of the gold ring, a symbol of eternal love, with “stray midnight gold that turns to dust by morning” (52) suggests that love can be an illusion, can turn to dust in the practical light of day; however, the suggestion can itself be an illusion. The ring first dropped by the Faerie Queen turns to crumbling leaf, and her later attempt to use the ring to marry Corbet and Rois in her wood, a “shadow-marriage in a shadowland,” fails when Rois drops the ring and takes hold of Corbet instead (233). In the end, Corbet returns the ring to Rois in the mortal world, and it remains solid gold in her hand, suggesting perhaps the possibility that in the transformed mortal world in which Corbet, Rois, and Laurel are all free to make their own choices, the positive qualities of the ring as symbol can still be considered true. Perhaps it will be possible for Rois and Corbet, Laurel and Perrin, to join equally in marriages based on lasting love, although it is significant that marriage remains only a possibility, as the narrative ends without the expected double wedding. In this manner the stereotypical happily ever after is avoided, and the lack of closure allows for the openness and flexibility inherent in the archetype of marriage.

The doubling of the male and female heroes allows for the exploration of different conceptions of a loving relationship, different myths of romantic love: love as a

bittersweet and short-lived passion, as an eternal commitment that may be an illusion, as clinging and suffocating, or as a kind of hunt in which the object is the devouring or consuming of the beloved. Neither the female hero nor the male hero can successfully achieve the quest for an identity that includes love by playing either role in a relationship based on hierarchy; the ideal outcome of the quest is a relationship between equals, between two adults each equally capable of independence and intimacy, as Robert Kegan describes in his discussion of the “interindividual stage” of the development of selfhood. As noted briefly in the previous chapter, Kegan sees the growth of the self from child to fully mature adult moving in a spiral pattern between times of autonomy, in which the focus is on the development of independence, and times of inclusion, in which the focus is on relationship-building. He believes that the strongest relationship is between two individuals who have each completed this process, emerging from the spiralling pattern of growth into a final balance, the interindividual stage, where a “genuinely adult love relationship” marked by a “capacity for interdependence, self-surrender and intimacy, [and] interdependent self-definition” (227) is possible. In those patterns of the hero’s quest which I have described as monomyths, the goal of the solitary hero questing with the help of others is to complete the quest in possession of a sense of autonomy, a self capable of making choices, but the capacity for intimacy and inclusion is not similarly prized. I have argued that the structure of the duomyth does allow for a more inclusive outcome to the hero’s quest, does include in its more open structure the valuing of relationships with others, thus resulting in an identity capable of realizing that “[t]he choices for adulthood need not be between a form of intimacy at the expense of identity,

or an identity at the expense of intimacy” (Kegan 253). In other words, the hero of the duomorph achieves power-within, a strong sense of his or her own unique talents and the ability to make choices, without the need to gain power-over others, and thus is capable of sharing that self equally and intimately with another who has also successfully completed the quest.

The resolution of the two worlds here is not with a narrated happily-ever-after marriage, but with a suggestion that the relationship between Rois and Corbet has a new beginning in the mortal world, freed from the stereotypes of the myth of romantic love, of love at first sight. The primary narrative world, the mortal world that changes with the seasons, that includes both life and death and love, can at times be too practical — for example, Laurel’s wincing at the constant discussion of cow ailments — but can also contain magic, as the world of Faerie is not separate from or outside of Rois’ community, but rather within it, overlaid upon it. Lynn Hall is both a decaying building in Rois’ community, and also a beautiful manor house constructed according to Tearle’s dreams. The woods are marked by the changing seasons, by spring, summer, fall, and winter, but are also the unchanging home of the Faerie Queene, containing at one and the same moment the cold of winter, the spring flowers, the summer roses, and the autumn leaves. In the woods Rois gathers the medicines that heal the villagers, and in the woods the night riders pause in their moon-hunt. There is a sense at the end that Rois and Corbet have achieved a balance between these worlds, that their relationship is no longer bound by stereotypical expectations but is free to be a real force combining both passion and practicality. Rois’ quest for identity has been completed, in that she seems to have better

integrated the wild and the practical sides of her inner self, and her questions about her parentage have been answered to her satisfaction, if not to the reader's. Also, her caring for her sister over the long winter, and her developing professional relationship with the village apothecary suggest that her life will include meaningful work in her community. When her tale comes to an end, her quest for love is really only beginning; she is able to still feel magic but not be distracted from the realities of the hard world in which she lives, and she and Corbet have an opportunity to begin their relationship as equal partners, as people rather than stereotypes. Rois has discovered the true nature of love and is beginning a quest for a love that is real, a relationship between equals, rather than falling victim to the myth of romantic love that can only end in the submission of one partner to another.

Chapter 6 - Conclusion

In the preceding pages, I have deliberately chosen to speak from the mind rather than from the heart, to follow the guidance of past teachers and give voice only to the scholar and thus reveal very little of the woman. Although the transformation may seem shockingly abrupt, in the few pages remaining I intend to reverse that decision, to speak instead as a woman whose life has been shaped as much by the inner journeys through the narrative worlds of authors such as Patricia McKillip as by experiences in the real world.

To be honest, I have always regretted Rois' wearing of sensible shoes to Lynn Hall, as I have regretted Sybel's decision to leave her beautiful garden of solitude and return to noisy Sirle, where it is doubtful that she would receive a very warm welcome from her sisters-in-law after indirectly causing their husbands to disappear into the woods for weeks. Their actions seem to be, on the surface at least, an accommodation, a compromise of their personal power, a betrayal of their strength in order to make their men happy. I much prefer the final image of Raederle, sitting on a rock by the sea, forcing her lover to seek her out, and insisting on a life lived alone, further exploring and developing her powers, meeting her lover only once a century. When I first encountered Raederle, Sybel, and Rois, I was unaware of Annis Pratt's argument that the female hero could be either strong in her solitary green world or trapped by love in the public world, but at some level I felt the same way. I wanted Sybel to remain in her tower, growing in wizardly strength, and Rois to live barefoot and wise in the woods. And yet I also wanted Sybel to be with Coren, Rois to be with Corbet, and, frankly, Raederle to see Morgon maybe a little more often. I wanted, still want, the female hero to achieve both selfhood and love.

Once upon a time I would very likely have agreed with the feminist critics whose work I have referenced about the female hero's thwarted quest for a sense of self that need not be sacrificed in order to experience true love. I would have accepted without question that marriage was the end of selfhood and the development of personal power, requiring the forfeiture of my needs and desires. And it still seems to me difficult, although not impossible, to reconcile the growth of personal power and meaningful work with loving relationships, to be both a scholar-wizard and a nurturing wife. This difficulty is reflected in the sense of ambivalence I feel when I read of the quests of Raederle, Sybel, and Rois, even though the outcomes of their quests are more successful than those experienced by other female heroes of literature. Raederle grows into a powerful woman, equal in strength and magic to her lover Morgon, but he holds the social status, the position of High One, while her status would seem to be that of the High One's wife or partner. Sybel still possesses her knowledge of ancient lore, of spells and magic, but in releasing the mystical creatures that symbolize some of her power, and in leaving the mountain home where she was undisputed ruler, she becomes a wife, one among many wives and mothers at Sirle, and thus loses some sense of being special. And Rois, although likely to some day marry Corbet and thus become the lady of Lynn Hall, seems diminished in some way from the barefoot herbwoman I first met in the woods. Part of this sense of ambivalence, of frustration, might be attributed to the tendency of fantasy writers such as McKillip to look backwards, into the pre-technological past, when the roles allowed to women were fewer and more restricted than in the present and, hopefully, in the future. But it also reflects the experience of many present-day authors

and readers that the quest to have it all — individual power, meaningful work, loving relationships — requires the female hero to overcome almost impossible obstacles both personal and societal.

Some might argue that looking to fictional characters as role models is foolish, particularly when those characters inhabit a narrative world that departs in so many ways from the real world of the reader. But such a statement ignores the fact that fictional characters do matter to readers, that reading about fantastic worlds does feel like being there in some sense. This is what Thomas Pavel refers to when he summarizes Kendall Walton's concept of the fictional ego, a concept which captures the relationship many readers describe having with the fictional text: "caught up in a story, [they] participate in fictional happenings by projecting a fictional ego who attends the imaginary events" (85). Northrop Frye phrases the same idea in words that get to the heart of the experience of reading quest fantasy when he says that "the reader, the mental traveller, is the hero of literature, or at least of what he [or she] has read." He goes on to note the importance of reading to the reader's real world quest for identity: "One's reading thus becomes an essential part of a process of self-creation and self-identity" (185-6). Our relationship with the characters and with the world that they inhabit is important to our relationships with our selves and our communities.

The reader's relationship with fictional worlds is not only a matter of personal and individual growth, but also can lead to a change in the larger sociocultural world. In developing her inclusive definition of fantasy, Kathryn Hume describes the reciprocal relationships among author and his or her world, the text and the fictional world

contained therein, and each reader and his or her world (12). Hume argues that the relationship between the text and the reader, and between the reader and the reader's world, is not unidirectional. In other words, not only is the reader influenced by participating in the narrative world of the text, but that reader is also able to influence his or her own world in order to make it conform more to the narrative world. The reader who learns to want, to desire, a different way of being and knowing and who becomes dissatisfied with having to escape to fictional worlds in order to experience a better way of living is likely to work towards transforming the real world, changing habits and ideas and institutions that make that world a frustrating place in which to live.

What many women feel needs to be changed is the concept of marriage. Even today, all too often new brides, happy in their careers and their equal relationships with sensitive, intelligent men, find themselves becoming wives trapped in marriages built upon hierarchies of power, between a dominant husband and a submissive wife. Many women find power in themselves and in their work, but when it comes to relationships, they fall into the stereotyped expectations of the cultural myth. By participating in the narrative world built upon the structure of the duomyth and experiencing the quest for identity shared equally between the female and the male hero, the reader might find it possible to leave that fictional world with a changed concept of what marriage means and how it might be lived in real life.

The fairytales of cultural myth, the Disneyfied stereotypes that inform many readers' expectations of marriage, end with the wedding and the promise of happiness ever after. The closure of the text with the wedding means that the reader never gets to

experience marriage, the ongoing life shared with another person, in which the promise of eternal happiness is seldom perfectly realized. But McKillip doesn't end the quests of her female heroes with a wedding. Raederle refuses to marry Morgon in the proper manner, although he asks her first in Caithnard, where her father would officiate, and again in Hed, his own home. However, even though they are not legally married, they behave as a typical married couple in many ways. Their journey along Traders' Road, for example, is marked by bickering born from frustration and ended by make-up kisses, only to start again the next day. But their squabbles do not mean the end of their bond, their deep affection for each other, demonstrating to the reader that husbands and wives can disagree and express that disagreement without ending their connection to each other.

In contrast to Raederle's two refusals, Sybel and Coren are married twice, first by the witch Maelga in a ceremony reminiscent of a neopagan handfasting, officiated by a woman and making reference to the four natural elements, and again by Coren's brother Rok, the family patriarch, in a ceremony witnessed by their small community. But these weddings take place in the middle of their quest, rather than at the end, and the couple most assuredly does not live happily ever after. The scene in which the couple lie silently in bed, backs turned to each other, after an argument ending in Sybel's admission that her motivation for marrying Coren was not solely her love for him, certainly evokes familiar memories for any reader who has gone to bed angry with a mate. And yet their troubles with each other do not end their marriage.

Rois' quest also does not end with a wedding, although the reader, like Rois and Laurel's father, might have anticipated a double ceremony in the spring. It seems likely

that Rois and Corbet will marry, eventually, and that their future relationship will be stronger and more honest because of their travails together. But their marriage is only hinted at, not realized in the narrative itself, and the lack of the expected closure is as significant to changing the concept of marriage as are Raederle's refusal and Sybel's overdetermined confusion. If the tale does not end with the wedding, then it also does not end with the promise of eternal happiness.

Romantic love and marriage may be society's ways of coercing women into their own oppression, as some feminist critics have suggested. Love and marriage may be forces driven by a perceived need for psychic completion, an integration of different aspects of our psyche in order to feel whole as a complete individuated personality. Love and marriage may be just what the old myths tell us, the soul's attempt to rejoin its sundered half and regain the mythic whole. They may be all of these things and none of them, but they are real forces in the world of authors and readers and it is unrealistic to expect women authors and readers to deny their existence or even seek to dispose of them completely. What is not unrealistic is to attempt a transformation of those forces so that the end result is a sense of equality and union between two free and complete individuals.

By playing different parts in life's drama, as the duomyth structure allows for, the reader can more easily discover the power-within, the unique sense of individual talents and abilities, without having to surrender a part of that power in order to share a life with another. McKillip's female heroes are strong and powerful women: sorceresses, wizards, shape-changers, warriors, and rulers. They have a strong sense of their own abilities and meaningful work to perform in their narrative worlds. But they also successfully achieve

the quest for true love, for a relationship of equality and union with a partner who is a soulmate, their other half, speaking both structurally and mythically. They have completed their quests for an identity that includes love, and have taken on the responsibility to guide others, the readers who participate in their narrative worlds, along that same path.

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