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Editorial: Romance revisited

When *CCL* put out a call for papers on Canadian women writers for children, they came in clusters – several on Nellie McClung, several on Catharine Parr Traill, and many, predictably, on L.M. Montgomery. Our first installment of these papers appeared in CCL# 62; we reserved the Montgomery studies for the present issue. The thrust of these Montgomery papers is feminist: all emphasize the anti-patriarchal sub-texts embedded in the apparently conventional work of this very popular author, so long subject to dismissal or to patronizing criticism by the literary pundits of the press and the colleges.

One article collates Montgomery's rebellious subtexts with the contemporary feminism of such writers as Virginia Woolf; another explicates the ambiguous revelation of forces ranged against female artistry in the *Emily* series; a third offers a revisionist interpretation of *Anne of Green Gables*. A fourth article traces intertextual echoes of Lewis Carroll's Alice in Anne. Our cover picture, of a lady dressed to the nines and living high off the hog complements a general focus in this issue on puns and subtexts. Finally, an essay on the language of diaries kept by young women in the late 19th century, adds a linguistic stratum to the current discussions of the way women, trained to a life of deference and domesticity, have handled the complex weapon of language.

The effect of L.M. Montgomery on all subsequent discourses of empowerment, aesthetic, linguistic, political and social, will be recognized this spring, in two sessions of the Annual conference of Learned Societies. Organizers report that 26 papers were submitted in response to the announcement of the Montgomery sessions – further indication of the groundswell of interest to which this issue of *CCL* attests.

With this issue a major change takes place in the *CCL* establishment. François Paré, who has made this journal a unique example of dedication to an ideal of bilingualism, in content and presentation, has accepted responsibility for editing another scholarly journal, *Renaissance and Reformation*. We are very pleased that Daniel Chouinard, like Professor Paré a member of the French Department at the University of Guelph, has agreed to join our editorial group. Professor Chouinard has published many articles on French literature of the 17th century and on Québec literature.

Pour une relecture des romans à l'eau de rose

Quand nous avons fait l'appel des communications sur les femmes écrivains pour enfants du Canada, le bureau de *CCL* a reçu un nombre impressionnant de propositions, dont plusieurs sur Nelly McClung, Catharine Parr Traill et, bien entendu, sur L.M. Montgomery. Le numéro 62 a publié les articles sur les deux premiers auteurs; nous avons réservé les études sur L.M. Montgomery pour le présent numéro. L'orientation des articles publiés ici est féministe. Ils mettent tous l'accent sur les sous-entendus anti-partriarcaux inscrits dans l'oeuvre apparemment conventionnelle d'un écrivain fort populaire, qui a été soumis au rejet ou à la critique condescendante des pontifes littéraires de la presse et de l'Université.

L'un de ces articles établit un rapprochement entre ces sous-entendus et le féminisme contemporain d'écrivains tels que Virginia Woolf; un deuxième explique le jeu ambigu des forces qui s'exercent sur le talent artistique féminin dans la série des *Emily*; le troisième propose une interprétation moins orthodoxe d'*Anne aux pignons verts*. Enfin, le quatrième dépiste le jeu intertextuel de ce roman sur *Alice au pays des merveilles*. Notre couverture, qui montre une dame sur son trente et un faisant face à un porc tiré à quatre épingles, illustre bien l'insistance du présent numéro sur les jeux de mots et les sous-entendus. En dernier lieu, un article sur le langage des journaux intimes écrits par de jeunes femmes à la fin du siècle dernier ajoute une dimension linguistique à la discussion sur la manière dont les femmes, enfermées dans un univers de soumission et de tâches domestiques, ont manié l'arme complexe qu'est la langue.

L'impact de l'oeuvre de L.M. Montgomery sur les discours subséquents de prise de parole et de pouvoir, qu'ils soient esthétiques, linguistiques, politiques ou sociaux, sera reconnu, cette année, à deux sessions du congrès des Sociétés savantes. Les organisateurs ont reçu 26 propositions de communication, ce qui indique de façon éclatante l'intérêt que suscite cet auteur, le présent numéro de *CCL* en faisant également foi.

Il faut, cependant, signaler un changement à la composition du comité de la revue. François Paré, qui avait fait de notre revue, dans son contenu et dans sa présentation, un exemple unique d'attachement à un idéal de bilinguisme, doit nous quitter: il a pris la direction d'une autre publication savante, *Renaissance et Réforme*. Nous sommes heureux d'annoncer que M. Daniel Chouinard, également du Département d'études françaises de l'Université de Guelph, a accepté de se joindre à notre équipe. M. Chouinard a publié des articles sur la littérature françaises du 17e siècle et a donné des communications sur la littérature québécoise.

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Subverting the trite: L.M. Montgomery's "room of her own"[1]

Mary Rubio

Résumé: *Certaines oeuvres de L.M. Montgomery recourent à des symboles et à des procédés narratifs pour montrer quelles sont les forces qui s'exercent à la fois en faveur et contre les ambitions artistiques d'une jeune femme écrivain.*

"Woe to the poor mortal who has not even one small room to call her own."
L.M. Montgomery, Journal entry, May 1, 1899

"But you may say, we asked you to speak about women and fiction – what has that got to do with a room of one's own?"
Virginia Woolf, *A room of one's own*, 1929

Both L.M. Montgomery and Virginia Woolf, almost exact contemporaries, experienced many of the same impediments to female authorship, and each succeeded in very different ways in spite of these. Montgomery lived from 1874 to 1942, Virginia Woolf from 1882 to 1941. Despite the enormous difference in their access to culture – Montgomery was raised in a small farming community on Prince Edward Island and Woolf was raised in an extremely literate household in cultured London – there are a number of similarities between their work, lives and temperaments. Both came from intense, energetic families who were socially prominent in their individual spheres. Both left voluminous journals and letters which provide a rich background for understanding their literary production. And both have been a powerful force in the empowerment of women in the 20th century.

Montgomery and Woolf have left a record of major depressive episodes which reveal either inherently fragile nervous systems or incredibly stressed lives, depending on one's interpretative stance. Both lost their mothers at an early age – Montgomery at 21 months and Woolf at 13 years. Both were very sensitive, and as children suffered from hostility and instability in their patriarchal environment – Maud from the abusive outbursts of temper of her grandfather and nearby uncle, Virginia from sexual abuse by her brothers. Both Montgomery and Woolf exhibited labile emotions, with wide mood swings, and both sought an explanatory concept for this in their ancestry – each saw herself derived from an ascetic, Puritan lineage on one side and a volatile, passionate lineage on the other side. Both married relatively late – Montgom-

ery in 1911 at 35, Woolf in 1912 at 30; Montgomery to a man whose mental instability imprisoned her in shame and loneliness, and Woolf to a man whose assiduous control of her life, though apparently well-meaning, was a kind of custodial imprisonment. Both Montgomery and Woolf brooded on their childhood traumas and inscribed their concern with the welfare of children into their art; each wrote powerfully of the inner lives of women and children. Not only did each resent the fact that she had been denied the same education that bright young men in her family had been given, but each also resented the fact that women were given little psychological and physical space in which to grow and write. As a result, both wrote about the importance of a woman having a metaphorical "room of her own."

At the time that these women began writing, the cards were stacked against women who wanted a literary career. It was difficult for most women to compete with better-educated men in the writing of novels, and when women did write, their books were rarely taken as seriously. Creative literature shows us who we are, and what issues are important in our lives. Women were shut out of an experiential creative realm that validated their existence and challenged oppressive attitudes. What both Montgomery and Woolf recognized was that it is necessary for women writers to have equal opportunity to create fictional worlds from women's perspectives – to create, so to speak, rooms of their own. The medium (and style) through which Montgomery and Woolf spoke may have been radically different, but their message was much the same.

Cultural anthropologists and feminist historians of the last quarter century have thoroughly examined the patriarchal nature of our culture: they have exposed the way it has placed the male sex at its centre and designated the female sex as marginal and less important. Literary historians like Elaine Showalter (*A literature of their own*) have documented the fact that the intellectual climate engendered by the patriarchal system in the 19th century made women feel anxious about authorship. Because public discourse was a male domain, women who wrote sought ways to avoid censure: some prefaced their works with apologies pleading necessity to earn a respectable living; others, like the Brontës, used androgynous or male pseudonyms; and most women kept a low literary profile because they wrote in non-canonical forms. Some 19th century female authors like Jane Austen have been dismissed by male academics well into this century. "George Eliot" (Mary Ann Evans) was a rare female writer in that she managed to be taken seriously in her own time, but she did this partly by breaking out of traditional female gender roles in her own personal life. Her situation was unusual and complicated. She railed as much as male critics about "silly scribbling women" which was, at the least, sensible protection against being thought to be one of them.

A second wave of feminists has also begun to see how the previously ignored 19th century women writers who wrote *popular* fiction, as distinct from the male writers of "canonized" *serious* literature, managed to challenge the ide-

ologies that informed and shaped their culture despite the restrictions imposed by the genres within which they worked. Women produced a huge number of "popular" romances from the 18th century onward, but these were considered ephemeral literature – not worthy of notice beside the novels written by male literary greats. We are only learning now, through the studies of feminist literary theorists, that these women writers in fact did a great deal to question the validity of their male-centred culture and its patriarchal values even though they wrote in genres judged "inferior." One excellent book of the past decade is Rachel Blau DuPlessis's *Writing beyond the ending: narrative strategies of twentieth-century women writers.*[2] She outlines the ways that modern women writers present fictions that confront and challenge the prevailing ideologies. Her comments about the way that 20th century women writers choose and execute their literary discourses are in many cases applicable to earlier novels as well and certainly to L.M. Montgomery:

> Narrative may function on a small scale the way that ideology functions in a large scale – as a 'system of representations by which we imagine the world as it is.' To compose a work is to negotiate with these questions: What stories can be told? How can plots be resolved? What is felt to be narratable by both literary and social conventions? Indeed, these are issues very acute to...feminist critics and women writers, with their sense of the untold story, the other side of a well-known tale, the elements of women's existence that has never been revealed (3).

My focus in this paper is on the way Montgomery both works within the traditional literary genre of domestic romance and yet circumvents its restrictive conventions when she critiques her society; how she decides to incorporate elements of women's experience that were not usually dealt with in fiction for women and children in her era; how she makes it safe for herself to tell tales and say things which are outside the pale of acceptable female public discourse. In the semi-autobiographical *Emily* trilogy, for instance, she focuses on how a young woman who wants to become a writer learns to negotiate with a patriarchal society which discourages female selfhood and individuality, denying her "a room of her own."[3] The three *Emily* books and *The blue castle* incorporate much of Montgomery's inner life, though the details are fictional. The books were all published between 1923 and 1927, and form a very important progressive sequence, with the order of publication being *Emily of New Moon* (1923), *Emily climbs* (1925), *The blue castle* (1926), and *Emily's quest* (1927).

One of the sources of the extraordinary appeal of Montgomery's books in her own time and ours lies in the fact that she was able to reinforce all the prevailing ideologies which her conventional readers expected while at the same time embedding a counter-text of rebellion for those who were clever enough to read between the lines. And in many cases, I expect, this countertext entered young minds subliminally, there to grow as the child grew until it became a discernible, compelling discourse on women's rights. For instance, a book

called *The girl within*, by the Harvard-trained psychologist Emily Hancock (Random House, 1989), deals with the question of how girls establish their identity. Emily Hancock cites Montgomery's *Emily of New Moon* as a book which had much impact on her personal life (220-226). In their "Afterwords" to the recent New Canadian Library editions of *Emily of New Moon* and *Emily climbs* Alice Munro and Jane Urquhart respectively talk about the way in which Montgomery's "Emily" provided a model of female authorship for them. Alice Munro makes further comments about the L.M. Montgomery books in interviews with Catherine Ross and with Tim Struthers. Because Munro is certainly acclaimed as one of Canada's very best writers, we take especial notice when she states that "the three Emily books...were all *very* important to me." She continues, "I think *Emily of New Moon* is by *far* her [Montgomery's] best book...In many ways there's great psychological truth in it, and it's also a very powerful book" (18); when asked if there are features of Montgomery's fictional world that connected Montgomery's world with rural Ontario, Munro replies: "Oh, very much so. In the family structure, I think....A connection with the sort of people she was dealing with, the old aunts and the grandmothers, the female power figures...a sense of injustice and strangeness in family life and of mystery in people that was familiar to me" (Struthers 19).

Montgomery's *Emily* books have obviously encouraged much female authorship. Another of the Canadian women who writes with such deep insight into the lives of women in small communities is Margaret Laurence who mentions her own youthful acquaintance with Montgomery's writing in her last book, *Dance on the earth: a memoir*. Margaret Atwood, the Canadian author who probably has the highest international profile, notes more than a passing familiarity with Montgomery also. In an interview in Götenberg, Sweden, in August 1990, Atwood was asked a few questions by an audience after a radio interview. One of the first questioners began with the rather breath-taking assertion that "There are two Canadian authors, you, and the other is Lucy Maud Montgomery..." and proceeded to ask if there was a connection between her and L.M. Montgomery. Atwood replied that "we all read *Anne of Green Gables* as children" and then explained that she had read it again together with her daughter, with both of them crying over Matthew's death. She added that when she was young, "they" had been told "there was no Canadian literature" and that "that book [*Anne of Green Gables*] and other books...were not really literature, but," she added, "they *are*." She also told how it had been pointed out to her, and she hadn't thought of it consciously before, "that the alter-ego, best-friend/worst enemy/shadow-reflection/mirror-figure of Elaine in *Cat's eye* is named Cordelia which is also the name [in *Anne*]." She summed it all up by stating that "Obviously *Anne of Green Gables* is a subcutaneous archetypal memory...." A few of the other writers who have mentioned Montgomery's influence on them are Astrid Lindgren of Sweden (Cott 57-58), Rosemary Sutcliff of England and Jean Little of Canada (Little 23). Another

highly regarded Canadian writer, Carol Shields, has said, "My mother loved *Anne of Green Gables*. She couldn't wait till we were old enough to read it....I suppose that *Anne* was a model to just millions of girls who weren't ever able to act out the kind of battles that she had" (9).[4]

One of the battles Anne and Emily had was to be taken seriously. Being a female was a handicap in this enterprise. Not far into *Emily of New Moon* (1923), the child "Emily" is told that she is of little importance in the scale of things: this is very true, for orphaned girls at the turn of the century in North America were particularly low on the social totem pole. When Emily is told, "You ought to be thankful to get a home anywhere. Remember you're not of much importance", Montgomery's Emily replies proudly: "I am important to myself." That retort was astonishing for its era, and many a little girl must have been amazed at Emily's audacity, while tucking away the comment as an empowering idea: *girls* can be important!

It is the fact that Montgomery was able to employ "narrative strategies that express critical dissent from the dominant narrative pattern" (DuPlessis 3) which has kept her books *au courant* as society changed. Because of Montgomery's strategic position between the end of Victorianism and the growth of Modernism, her subcutaneous "counter-texts" of rebellion have given her an important role in helping young women – and young female writers – formulate a healthy sense of female self.

Since the recent opening of the canon to women writers, two major books on Montgomery's works have already been written: a recent doctoral dissertation on Montgomery by Gabriella Åhmansson is available from the University of Uppsala, Sweden, in book form as *A life and its mirrors: a feminist reading of L.M. Montgomery's fiction (Volume I: an introduction to Lucy Maud Montgomery* and Anne Shirley).[5] In Canada Elizabeth Epperly's *The fragrance of sweetgrass: L.M. Montgomery's heroines and the pursuit of romance* will be available this year. The newer branches of cross-disciplinary criticism which look at all literary and textual production as a phase of wider human culture have given new impetus to the study of popular and powerful writers like Montgomery. The University of Guelph Archives holds L.M. Montgomery's "Clipping Book" into which she compiled reviews which came to her from a clipping service, starting in 1910. It shows that her books were reviewed all over the English-speaking world as soon as they appeared, and the reviews were almost always favourable.

Now that foreign academics have started writing doctoral and M.A. dissertations on Montgomery, and a flood of articles has started appearing in American journals, Canadians recognize that in Montgomery they have a truly unique figure who has embedded her imprint on generations of readers worldwide. Sometimes this imprinting is at an unconscious level. When Colleen McCullough's 1987 novel, *The ladies of Missalonghi*, was published, enraged L.M. Montgomery fans from the USA, Britain, and Australia wrote letters of

protest to McCullough's publisher and to other representatives of the L.M. Montgomery Estate saying that it bore too many similarities for their taste to Montgomery's *The blue castle*. One Canadian newspaper, the Kingston *Whig-Standard*,[6] did a feature article on the similarity, and immediately the media in Britain, Australia, and the United States fell upon the story, turning it into a minor international incident. After a long silence, out of reach of reporters on an island, McCullough stated tersely through her publisher that she had read *The blue castle* "as a child and loved it," as she had loved all of L.M. Montgomery's books.[7]

Thus, Montgomery's world-wide impact has been both cultural and economic, and some preliminary studies have already been done to assess her influence. A substantial, thoroughly researched dissertation by Krystyna Sobkowska entitled "The reception of the *Anne of Green Gables* series by Lucy Maud Montgomery in Poland" was completed at the University of Lodz, Poland, in 1982/3. Unfortunately, attempts to research the Montgomery publishing history in North America have been hampered by the destruction of many of the McClelland & Stewart publishing records, as well as those of the L. C. Page Company, which was acquired by Farrar, Straus, and Giroux in the 1950s. Another approach to establishing an author's reach is by citing references to her work by readers and other writers who have been influenced by her. A further dimension of Montgomery's influence is seen in the way that she has affected tourism and inspired "spinoff" industries. For instance, *CCL* issue #34 (1984) looks at the way the Japanese have made an industry out of "Anne." In 1991 15,000 Japanese tourists came to Prince Edward Island to see the landscape Montgomery made famous (Reddin). Tourism, thanks to Montgomery's books, has become one of the Island's biggest industries, with over 750,000 people visiting tiny PEI in 1991 (Reddin). This infusion of tourists started in 1909, the year after *Anne's* publication. Last year Japan developed part of a Japanese island into a multi-million dollar themepark, part of which is devoted to Montgomery, with reconstructions of Cavendish in it.[8]

Not too long after Elizabeth Waterston and I published the first volume of *The selected journals of L.M. Montgomery*, we began to realize how geographically diverse was the interest in her. Calls and letters asking when the next volume would be ready came from all over: the United States, England, Australia, Scotland, Germany, Sweden and other places. Several Montgomery fans urged us to hurry because they were too old to last much longer and couldn't, as one caller put it, bear to die without reading the rest of the journals. One fan's husband wrote that his wife had cancer, and he begged us to let them know what happened since his wife might not survive to read about the subsequent unfolding of Montgomery's life. Many spoke of the joy they had in finding "another book" by Montgomery after a lifetime of rereading her other published books and thinking there were no more. In 1984, Dr. Waterston and I, along with Mrs. Ruth Macdonald, the widow of Montgomery's son Stuart,

travelled to Poland to see theatrical productions of Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* and *The blue castle* in Warsaw and Cracow, and we were astonished at the deep attachment people had to her books in that country. Clearly L.M. Montgomery was far more than Canadians had taken her to be, a mere author of successful "children's" books: she was a writer of international influence who had changed lives and affected the ways that people thought. Despite the array of forces discouraging female authorship in her era, she had in fact created a small room of her own in the great house of fiction. In that room, she had been holding forth for nearly 100 years, drawing in a steady stream of readers from around the globe, and they had kept her writings alive.

L.M. Montgomery can make some unique claims to fame. Most of the writers from earlier eras who are still in print are so by virtue of their books having become "canonized" texts that are assigned to college and university students, a process which creates an academic "life-support" system. Otherwise, both popular and serious writers of any era tend to fade away: popular writers because public tastes and concerns change and "serious" writers because their audience, small to begin with, wanes. Montgomery's first claim is that she is one of the few writers who has left a large corpus of work – 22 works of fiction in her case – which have survived for nearly a century *without* being in that "canonized" group of texts with artificially inflated sales.[9] Montgomery's loyal readers, which include librarians and elementary school teachers, have kept her books in print; some, like *Anne of Green Gables*, have consistently maintained enormous sales.

Secondly, she is one of the few writers who retain their readers throughout a full life cycle: when her young readers grow up, many keep re-reading her books, often finding new levels of meaning at different stages of their lives. We have met or heard from scores of readers past retirement age who tell us that they reread their favourite Montgomery books every year.

Third, Montgomery is a writer who has had a strangely diverse appeal to thousands of people from widely different cultures, nationalities, and geographical locations. Her books are so rich that they have provided whatever a cultural subgroup of readers needed: for women writers all over the world they have pointed the way to female authorship; for ordinary people, especially women, in countries as widely divergent as the United States and Japan, they have provided personal empowerment; and for nations like Poland they have furnished a subversive political agenda. It is very difficult to think of any other single writer – male or female – who can make all of these three claims. It is to our shame that we have only begun to document the extent of her influence nearly half a century after her death.

The next question to ask is, "what gives her books such far-ranging and powerful appeal?" I attempt only a preliminary and partial outlining of the techniques which Montgomery uses to subvert the triteness of genre in which she works so that her books confront issues of wide cultural significance. Work-

ing in a very restrictive genre, the domestic romance, she presented a surface reinforcement of all the prevailing ideologies which her early 20th century audience demanded: beliefs, for instance, that women's place was in the home and that they should confine their activities to the domestic sphere; that they should be subservient to men; that female heroines should be sexless, refined "ladies" of spiritual purity who conformed to society's expectations; that any "bad" girls should be punished with bad fortune or death; that the ideal closure for a "good" young girl's story must be marriage. Montgomery's society and readership were patriarchal, whether we look at the largely Presbyterian Prince Edward Island about which she wrote or at the multi-denominational world-wide readership which devoured her novels.

Yet though Montgomery has been long dismissed by those who set the literary canons as someone who wrote only sentimental, escapist, rosy-coloured fictions, scholars of the last decade have been uncovering ways in which other writers like her offer elements of protest and resistance within highly 'orthodox' plots. In *Anne's house of dreams* (1917), for instance, Montgomery works up the frame story of Anne and Gilbert's idealized love, confirming all the expectations about marriage her conventional readers held, but she subverts this narrative frame with a nightmare version of marriage. The real story within the frame story is the horrifying tale of Leslie Moore (note: initials "LM"), a mysterious, refined, intelligent, and passionate woman yoked by marriage to a crazy man – a "big, handsome fellow with a little, ugly soul" who had been abusive, alcoholic and destructive until an accident mercifully rendered him mindless through amnesia. Children read the story on one level; adult women may read it on another. Montgomery knows how to reach both audiences. And she knows whereof she writes: she herself presents the illusion to the public that she has a marriage as idyllic as Anne and Gilbert's is in *Anne's house of dreams*, but the truth is that as she writes she is beginning to experience the horror of being locked into a marriage that is far worse than dead. Montgomery knew a lot about passionate and intelligent women being married to men who were not their equals; her own husband, albeit a kindly man, shared nothing of her intellectual life and slipped by degrees into a frightening mental illness. Of her own situation she writes in her private journals, "A man who is physically ill is still the same man: but a man in Ewan's case is *not*....An altogether different personality is there – and a personality which is repulsive and abhorrent to me. And to this personality I must be a wife. It is horrible – it is indecent...I feel degraded and unclean" (Nov. 1, 1921). Yet, as an author she incorporates an alternate story of an unsatisfactory marriage in such a way that its subversive and disturbing quality is not terribly apparent, at least to adults who would otherwise censor the book and keep it from children.

This is achieved several ways: the marriage of Leslie Moore is not presented as a marriage that could actually happen to anyone. The circumstances that

surround her "husband's" loss of his mental faculties were simply too unusual: it's in the realm of the 'fabulous,' rather like a fairy story. Montgomery's use of the oral narrative style of storytelling distances material which is not "proper" discourse for a domestic novel for women and children. Montgomery very successfully blends realistic material and serious subjects into the materials of entertaining, gossipy oral narrative.

Although Montgomery's books almost always end on a happy note, her characters often suffer great emotional distress. The cruelty they encounter is real: her narratives contain a virtual compendium of the forms of psychological abuse which real women and children have been subjected to. But Montgomery is clever, and like her revered Emily Dickinson, she tells things "slant." Nor does she consciously write to the same audience as Virginia Woolf does. Yet many of their themes are similar. Louise DeSalvo's *Virginia Woolf: the impact of childhood sexual abuse on her life and work* argues that Woolf has so many closely drawn adolescents because she was concerned with children's welfare. Woolf's childhood, like Montgomery's, had lacked stability and safeness, but for different reasons. Montgomery suffered, for instance, because of the unpredictable, irritable, and occasionally explosive nature of her grandfather, a primary care-giver who made her own personal world unstable and unsafe.

Woolf writes out of a cultured, literary tradition for a sophisticated audience. Montgomery writes out of the vernacular, oral tradition transplanted from Scotland into the red, verdant soil of isolated Prince Edward Island life and she writes for an all-encompassing popular audience. She surely describes herself perfectly when she writes of her alter ego, "Emily of New Moon" in *Emily's quest*: "She belonged by right divine to the Ancient and Noble Order of Story-tellers. Born thousands of years earlier she would have sat in the circle around the fires of the tribe and enchanted her listeners. Born in the foremost files of time she must reach her audience through many artificial mediums" (2).

Montgomery's artificial medium is chiefly the domestic romance. It serves her well, so long as she does not aim to write in an innovative form to impress the male canon-setters. *The blue castle* (1926), for instance, is a tidy little romance about an aging spinster (of 29) who finds a perfect mate after many trials and tribulations. The age of 29 appears to have been crucial. For instance, Virginia Woolf wrote in her own journal of June 8, 1911, "To be 29 and unmarried – to be a failure – childless – insane too, no writer" (Bishop 22). The Montgomery novel winds up with the expected conventional ending of marriage. But Montgomery manages to circumvent the restrictions of the genre and to show, before her ending, how badly society treated women who were unable to "get a man." Montgomery's own rage rises perilously close to the surface, but she camouflages it with humour. Furthermore, she presents a subversive model of womanhood: her heroine Valancy rebels against the clan

which uses her so badly. Her rebellion, which would have been untenable in reality for a respectable woman living in the real PEI community of Montgomery's youth, would have been punished with death in a conventional domestic novel of her era; instead, Montgomery rewards her heroine with marriage to a man who is both a millionaire and a sensitive creative writer. On a small domestic stage humanity's greatest struggle is enacted: that of the powerless against the powerful. Linda K. Christian-Smith states in *Becoming a woman through romance* that contemporary popular fiction and romances also often express ways for females to resist "patterns of domination" (9). The struggle in romance like Montgomery's is seen most often when women offer resistance to patriarchy or when children defy adult behaviour which damages them. Montgomery makes subjects that are still taboo today (like child abuse) acceptable through the use of humour and the oral tradition, both of which distance the otherwise unacceptable material.

Thus, when Montgomery dramatizes the struggle between those who control and those who are controlled, she usually depicts those who suffer as children or young women. Those who control are invariably adults, but they are not exclusively males. Instead, they are sometimes forceful females who have assumed or have been granted a position of power in the patriarchal social structure. The patriarchal society in which Montgomery grew up provided her with wonderful material for fiction. And the beautiful landscape of Prince Edward Island creates a strikingly ironic background: her depiction of the flawed human world becomes more dramatic when juxtaposed against the idyllic natural world. Likewise, her use of irony and sarcasm in dialogue fairly sparkles because of its contrast with the purple prose she employs to describe the settled beauty of the nature she loves.

"Authority" is manifested in various guises in a patriarchal culture, but it operates to keep women in the place tradition demands they occupy. Montgomery finds her own ways of criticizing a social system which puts women down. She says what is socially acceptable about male-female relationships, but she embeds a counter-message of numerous underlying dissonances. The disruptive and subversive elements serve to energize her texts; these elements also prevent her novels from portraying only the sentimental view of life that so many other contemporary domestic romances did. Nothing enraged Montgomery more than being called "sentimental," a term frequently used to dismiss women's writing, sometimes justifiably, of course. She defended herself against this charge. In her diary entry of January 27, 1922, she makes a clear distinction between "sentimentality" and "sentiment":

> Today I had a nice letter from Sir Ernest Hodder Williams (of Hodder and Stoughton) and some English reviews of Rilla. All were kind but one which sneered at my 'sentiment.' The attitude of some English critics towards anything that savors of sentiment amuses me. It is to them as the proverbial red rag to a bull. They are very silly. Can't they see that civilization is founded on and held together by sentiment. Passion is tran-

sient and quite as often destructive as not. Sentiment remains and binds. Perhaps what they really mean is 'sentimentality,' which is an abominable thing. But my books are not sentimental. I have always tried in them to register normal and ordinary emotions – not merely passionate or unique episodes.

Because her critics confused the materials she processed within her novels with the literary form (romance) she processed it into, they confused the "sentiment" in her novels with the "sentimentality" of the form. Montgomery's work has either been ignored or denigrated by male critics who dismissed it as sentimental,[10] confusing her medium with her message, if they in fact read her books which most of them probably did not.[11] Female academics have until recently been too intimidated to give scholarly attention to Montgomery, for work on a female writer deemed unimportant would be dismissed at annual Promotion and Tenure time.[12] The fact that gifted women writers with the unquestioned international stature of an Alice Munro have spoken with respect for Montgomery's works has helped make it safe for others to admit a serious interest in her works.

Montgomery may have suffered from lack of academic attention, but her readers were a loyal bunch, mothers passing along their love of her to their daughters. And as soon as feminist criticism made it respectable to look at writers like her, Montgomery has quickly become seen as an influential writer. She has validated female experience, given voice to female emotion, and helped remove women from imprisonment within silence and pain. Her techniques for circumventing the sentimentality which is inherent in formulaic prescriptions of domestic romance are many, varied, and obviously effective.

First, by working within a genre marketed primarily for a general audience consisting mostly of women and older children, Montgomery kept a low profile with her subversive comments, most of which are about patriarchal society. Various feminist historians, like Rachel DuPlessis and Sidonie Smith, have noted that most women of the 19th and early 20th century wrote in the "safe" genres of autobiography or romance; they also wrote for juveniles.[13] It was an enforced choice for various economic and social reasons, but, given that fact, these types of writing were outside the literary preserve of serious male writing, and hence did not come under the scrutiny of highbrow critics: women's writing was simply considered beneath serious notice. When Montgomery has Emily state in *Emily's quest* that "I have made up my mind that I will never marry. I shall be *wedded to my art*," Emily is making a second revolutionary statement for a girl of her era (after the one asserting that she was important to herself, if to no one else). Male authors had the right to consider themselves professionals who were producing "art," but 19th and early 20th women who wrote generally had to pretend that they wrote as an avocation or hobby, to get necessary income, or to educate the young. If they did take themselves seriously, they did not dare assert this publicly. George Eliot was an exception,

but her situation was very unusual and complicated.

We can see Montgomery still operating under these strictures in 1917, when, already a world-famous author due to *Anne of Green Gables* (1908) and six more books, she began a series of biographical sketches on herself: "When the Editor of *Everywoman's world* asked me to write 'The story of my career,' I smiled with a touch of incredulous amusement. My career? *Had* I a career? Was not a career something splendid...?" (*The alpine path* 5). She explains that she's so in the habit of obliging editors that she will write the requested piece. A male author of equal fame would have felt no need to begin his sketch in such a self-effacing way – he would have considered his writing a profession and his success proof of its excellence. But women authors were not expected to take themselves too seriously, or to toot their own horns too loudly.

However, Montgomery probably did take herself more seriously as the result of this assignment, for shortly afterwards, on August 24, 1920, she wrote, "I want to create a new heroine now – she is already in embryo in my mind." Her trilogy about "Emily," the little girl who aspired to be a writer, was published between 1924 and 1927. In the *Emily* books, Montgomery details all the impediments to a woman's authorship: "interruption, blockage, censorship, derision, self-hatred, and...repression," factors which DuPlessis says have plagued 20th century female authors (103). Most women authors, 19th or early 20th century, have experienced these, but often without being consciously aware of the problems as being endemic to all other women writers. Thus, the *Emily* novels must have been eye-opening books for many struggling and would-be female authors.[14]

Two years after the last *Emily* book, Virginia Woolf wrote her famous *A room of one's own* (1929) to explain how hard it was for a woman to become an author. Montgomery's books were marketed in Britain, of course, where they were widely reviewed and read by people from all walks of life. Even the Prime Minister of England, Stanley Baldwin, read them. In 1927, the year of the publication of Montgomery's third *Emily* book, for instance, Prime Minister Baldwin wrote to Montgomery: "Dear Mrs. Macdonald: – I do not know whether I shall be so fortunate during a hurried visit to Canada but it would give me keen pleasure to have an opportunity of shaking your hand and thanking you for the pleasure your books have given me...." (Montgomery journal entry, July 14, 1927). It is intriguing to wonder if Virginia Woolf might also have picked up Montgomery's *Emily* trilogy and mused over the fictional representation of all the obstacles to female authorship which Montgomery lays out so clearly. Bishop's *A Virginia Woolf chronology* lists many books which Woolf read, and Montgomery's books are not among these. Montgomery had a high profile in Britain, however, and was reviewed quite favourably by major British papers like the London *Times*, *Punch*, the *TLS*. It is, of course, certain that Woolf did read many books that she did not record, just as Montgomery herself did.[15]

In 1923 Montgomery was the first Canadian woman to be made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts in Great Britain. Her increasing visibility in the U.K. is shown by Prime Minister Baldwin's attention in summer 1927. It is possible that in June 1927, when Woolf went on a binge reading "trash," Montgomery's books may have been among these books, for Montgomery was considered a popular writer, not a writer of highbrow literature. In October 1928 Woolf gave the lectures at Girton which became, in 1929, *A room of one's own*. We also do not know if Montgomery ever read Woolf. I think it unlikely for in 1929 Montgomery's life was very hectic, and she was more often rereading old favourites for comfort instead of books on the "cutting edge" of literary Modernism. Whether they read each other's books or not, Montgomery's *Emily* books have been read by young writers all over the world, and Woolf's *A room of one's own* by older writers, particularly women, and critics. Both have been immensely influential.

For instance, Lady Wilson, wife of Harold Wilson, Prime Minister of England, wrote a Preface for the *Emily* books in which she gave an eloquent account of her own affection for them: when she was 11 she had been ill for a year and one of her father's parishioners had given her a copy of *Emily of New Moon*. She had read and reread it until she knew parts of it by heart. Then, later, when she recovered and went away to school, she "reread the book and realised that it must be set in Canada, and it was with a shock of delight that, looking at the map, I found Prince Edward Island. I decided to write to L.M. Montgomery, telling her of my liking for the book, of my own aspirations to write, and also to explain that I could 'see wallpaper small in the air!'" She received a long letter, circa 1931-2, which said: "I'm glad you like 'Emily,' because she is my own favourite. She is purely a creature of my imagination but a good deal of my own inner life in childhood and girlhood went into her." She also mentioned that many people were under the impression, wrongly, that her "books are only for children." Lady Wilson finishes her Preface by adding that she is glad to have read *Emily*, for "Although I first read the book as a child I should not describe it as primarily a children's book, and certainly the two sequels are for adults. L.M. Montgomery meant the book to be read – as it is – by people of all ages, but possibly one cannot appreciate the character delineation until one is adult." Then she concludes, "I sat down one day to write this preface: two hours later I was still reading the book, not a word written. Not many books of our earlier years could be re-read with such pleasure."

Both Montgomery and Woolf read many of the same books when they were young: both were obviously much influenced by a common text: *Jane Eyre*. As Showalter notes, Brontë empowered later women writers to engage in "self-exploration" and create a "separatist literature of inner space:"[16]

> Psychologically rather than socially focused, this literature sought refuge from the harsh realities and vicious practices of the male world. Its favourite symbol, the enclosed and secret room, had been a potent image in women's novels since *Jane Eyre*... In children's

books, such as Mrs. Molesworth's *The tapestry room* (1879) and Dinah Craik's *The little lame prince* (1886), women writers had explored and extended these fantasies of enclosure. After 1900, in dozens of novels from Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The secret garden* (1911) to May Sinclair's *The tree of Heaven* (1917), the secret room, the attic hideaway, the suffragette cell came to stand for a separate world, a flight from men and from adult sexuality. (33)

Undeniably, Montgomery was an architect of "safe spaces": for Stanley Baldwin, living in a country which had just undergone the Great War, she probably created an idyllic haven in Green Gables' domesticity and the Avonlea setting. For women she created a space in which they could be domestic and yet discuss the inadequacy of that world, looking for "bends around the road" where there might be escape and empowerment. Women were locked into domesticity, and both Montgomery and Woolf explore ways in which it confined females. Women's rights were a growing concern to women everywhere. Female achievement in the Great War had given impetus to their empowerment, but much still lay ahead. For example, it was not until 1929, the year of Woolf's *A room of one's own*, that the British Privy Council reversed the famous 1928 "Persons Case" decision of the Supreme Court of Canada – which had declared that women were not "persons" and were therefore not entitled to hold public office as Canadian senators.

In using the traditional domestic romance, Montgomery herself found a safe space in which to write. She could give sharp critical digs to a social system prejudiced against women. The very use of the domestic romance leads her audience to expect her to confirm all its conventions, and when she does this – at least on the surface – no warning lights flash that she may be planning subversive forays enroute: expressing her own frustration with the way the males (her maternal grandfather and her mother's brothers) had treated her personally, she speaks out the only way she could – in fiction. In the *Emily* trilogy, for instance, much is made of the fact that Emily cannot have a "room of her own," her dead mother's empty room, a space of freedom and self-hood. Montgomery tells stories about women and children, and uses hackneyed plots, but she treats the subject of power within the context of women and children's lives in a patriarchal society.

This deviousness was necessary because many women readers would have been quite disturbed by a frontal attack on the social system which they took for granted, or on the institution of marriage; but they were not averse to seeing oppressive patriarchal power structures satirized. In their social world, conservative women condemned their more articulate Suffragette sisters while yet envying their freedom. Montgomery's small subversions make tidy "surgical strikes" without threatening to topple the overall system. A perfect example of indirect attack can be seen in "The Strike at Putney," one of Montgomery's some 500 short stories.[17] Here women disrupt the male power structure; eventually the men who run the church admit that they were unfair in refusing to

let a woman speaker use the church pulpit for an address, and subsequently the women return happily to their subordinate roles in the old power structure. Montgomery has shown her readers, however, that pompous, authoritarian men are helpless when women go on strike to assert their rights.

A **second** strategy Montgomery uses is to sugarcoat all of her subversive elements with humour. When Montgomery devotees explain today their affection for Montgomery, many cite this sense of humour. Her writing abounds with situational humour, verbal wit, and ironic and comic juxtapositions. She cleanses the souls of her readers by making them laugh. A nasty patriarch impaled by humour's hook ceases to threaten. Much of her humour arises because of the patriarchal structure of society. Here is a sample taken from a short story in *The chronicles of Avonlea* (1912). The speaker is a woman of middle-age who is being courted by an old beau, and she grumbles to another woman:

'I don't want to be married. Do you remember that story Anne Shirley used to tell long ago of the pupil who wanted to be a widow because "if you were married your husband bossed you and if you weren't married people called you an old maid?" Well, that is precisely my opinion. I'd like to be a widow. Then I'd have the freedom of the unmarried, with the kudos of the married. I could eat my cake and have it, too. Oh, to be a widow!' ('The end of a quarrel')

By using such humour to present the subordinate position of women after marriage, Montgomery avoids sounding like a crusading suffragette. However, something else is operating here, too, that makes her jibes against patriarchy unobjectionable to conventional readers: the careful distancing of the voice of L.M. Montgomery behind that of the person who supposedly makes the actual subversive statement. The above anecdote we are told originated with a child of indeterminate social status, was heard by the proper Anne Shirley who remembered it and passed it throughout the female-community where it was then overheard by our maiden lady; finally Montgomery's narrator repeats it for us in the story. No one takes responsibility for the statement or judges it. It's a safe comment, partly because it is presented in the layering of storyteller's anecdote.

Indeed, one of the characteristics that distinguishes Montgomery's writing is its "oral" quality. Montgomery had been raised in a family of gifted storytellers. Local gossip and clan history were very quickly elevated to polished oral narrative. Montgomery embeds secondary fictions throughout her surface narrative to create a distinctively layered structure which replicates the oral gossip of female gatherings. As readers we *love* hearing the risqué and unseemly things which get repeated, but such comments do not taint Montgomery herself since they are so far removed from her narrative voice. A minister's wife, as Montgomery was, could not be too careful in her choice of subjects, but she manages to bring into the sphere of literary discourse an amazing array of

rather shocking statements.

A **third** strategy is that of having characters of "no-importance" make the subversive comments. In the *Anne* series, Anne as a child makes outrageous comments and in this lies much of her personality. The minute Anne grows up and becomes the dignified wife, "Mrs. Dr. Gilbert Blythe," Montgomery sanitizes her thoughts and tongue and has her peppery, subversive comments delivered by people with less social standing in the community. Susan Baker, her cook, can express opinions that a proper, married Anne cannot. So can an unmarried eccentric like Miss Cornelia. Other unruly, motherless children like the Merediths are created for the same reason. It has been frequently claimed by critics that Montgomery's later *Anne* novels are not as good as the first; though this may appear true on the surface, for "Anne" loses her tartness, the novels do not lose their bite. We should note that Anne is simply no longer the focal character; she is only a device to hang the series together on. Montgomery keeps the later novels sparkling by devising a series of characters who can say or do what Anne cannot.[18]

This leads us to Montgomery's **fourth** strategy, her narrative method. Montgomery's plots – and there sometimes are no plots *per se* – are usually unoriginal, if not hackneyed. They depend heavily on unrealistic coincidence which is, of course, not uncommon in the romance genre. But plot is not important for her: her focus is on character, thoughts, feelings, and ideas. Since women in Montgomery's society were not expected even to *have* relevant independent thoughts, it was hard for fictional ones to create the action which propelled the novel. Women in Montgomery's later novels don't *cause* events to happen so much as *react* to what has happened, and then *discuss* it. For instance, in *Anne's house of dreams* Gilbert decides when and where they will move, etc.; the novel consists mostly of the rest of the characters talking about what has happened, is happening, or will happen in the community.

In a patriarchy, a woman's personal power lay largely in what she could manoeuvre by using language (flattery, nagging, or subtly manipulating her husband); women's public power lay in their being able to censure through community gossip. Patricia Meyer Spacks' *Gossip* gives an extended discussion of the function of gossip in women's lives and novels. Men may have controlled the law, but women could wreak havoc through the innuendoes of gossip. It was not only a source of entertainment but also it was a form of social control. In Montgomery's novels, people lived in fear of what others would say, as Montgomery herself did in her real life. In her novels, this female gossiping frequently produces a relatively non-linear plot progression, a pattern which Annis Pratt (11) sees as typical for women writers. In the Emily books it is not the surface events that are important: it is what Emily feels and thinks as she tries to accommodate her desire to be a writer to society's expectations that she marry and subordinate herself to a husband, not to art. Emily's feelings are complex and often rebellious, and although the narrative structure of

the book is vaguely chronological, her thought processes consist of a mental looping back and forth, not of a straightforward chronological advancing of events. The book is not the story of how Emily chooses a husband; it is the story of what she thinks along the way to her inevitable fate.

A **fifth** strategy, used primarily in the *Emily* books, is for Montgomery to intrude directly as narrator into the story and discredit the sanctity of traditional plot and genre conventions. For example, in *Emily of New Moon*, the narrator says, "This does not point...[to] any particular moral, of course; in a proper yarn Emily should either have been found out and punished for disobedience or been driven by an uneasy conscience to confess; but I am sorry – or ought to be – to have to state that Emily's conscience never worried her about the matter at all" (138).

An intrusive narrator who tells us that she disapproves of the conventions of the novel's formulae and that her heroine does not behave according to these is a rather bold disjunctive element in a 1920s domestic novel. Montgomery accomplishes a great deal with such a comment. She strikes up a personal, intimate relationship with the readers who feel they are the narrator's accomplice in the crime of flaunting convention. Montgomery and her readers know that wayward women and girls are fated to be punished in fictions about them, but another level of suspense is achieved through the suggestion that Emily may get away with unusual adventures. To approve of being "naughty," but only as Montgomery's accomplice, is very safe and appealing to a convention-bound reader.

In the oral tradition, establishing closeness between the narrator and the narratee is important. I have noticed that one of the most uniform elements among Montgomery's fans is their feeling of closeness to her. People who write us about her books and journals think of the author behind her works as a personal friend. There are many reasons why different people respond to her fiction, but they are all alike in feeling her a "kindred spirit" whose actual human presence lies in her writing – she is not seen as a distant, disembodied author. Here, in *Emily*, Montgomery is simply telling her readers that their approval of Emily's rebellious feelings is fine. She makes her readers her accomplices, part of the inner female circle, as she hints that she, the author, chafes at the restrictive conventions of the genre. Just as a postmodern writer of our time might do, Montgomery creates a secondary and self-reflexive discourse on the act of writing: she examines the fact that the "happy endings" of women's domestic romances are no more cliched that the convention of the "tragic ending" in serious male fiction. She has a lot more to say about the conventions of the "realistic" novel, too. As Emily's mentor Mr. Carpenter lies dying, he says:

> No use trying to please – critics. Live under your own hat. Don't be – led away – by those howls about realism. Remember – pine woods are just as real as – pigsties – and a darn sight pleasanter to be in. You'll get there – sometime – you have the root – of the matter

– in you. And don't – tell the world – everything. That's what's the – matter – with our – literature. Lost the charm and mystery – and reserve.

In Montgomery's journals she cites Morley Callaghan as the epitome of male realism become predictably tedious; he sees only pigsties and "latrines" and "insists blatantly that you see nothing else also. If you insist on seeing sky and river and pine you are a 'sentimentalist' and the truth is not in you" (Unpublished journals, December 30, 1928).

Closely related to the foregoing technique of narratorial intervention is her **sixth** device of having "respectable" characters within her novel verbally affirm the prevailing ideology of the society after her narrator and other less respectable characters have undercut it. This becomes complicated: (1) the genre sets up the expectations that the author will follow the standard conventions (2) the narrator or non-proper characters inside the novel subvert the conventions (3) then "respectable" characters like Anne reassure the readers that the conventional sentiments are correct.

For instance, in *Anne's house of dreams* the primary "subversive" character in the novel is Miss Cornelia, an avid "man-hater" who is forever saying, "Isn't it just like a man?" in condemnation, rightly or wrongly. She's highly eccentric, but as the country saying goes, she does quite often "hit the nail on the head." A full-fledged war between the sexes erupts when Dr. Gilbert Blythe suggests that Leslie Moore's husband be given a newly developed brain operation in hopes it might restore him to his rightful senses. Dick Moore is better as he is, with no mind, the women argue, than restored to his former hateful self. The men argue for the operation on the basis of reason and the women vigorously oppose it on the basis of emotion. To everyone's surprise, the operation is successful, and the newly conscious "Dick" tells them he is not in fact the Dick Moore they think he is. All the women eat humble pie, and Montgomery has Anne say, "Oh, Gilbert, you were right – so right. I can see that clearly enough now – and I'm so ashamed of myself – and will you ever really forgive me?" (232). The undiscriminating reader in the 1920s would feel reassured when Montgomery confirmed the prevailing ideology that women should always accept their husband's judgement as better than their own; however, Montgomery has made it perfectly clear that the operation could have been a disaster just as easily as a success, and it was chance, not moral strength, that made Gilbert right. And somehow the last word comes from the irascible Miss Cornelia, who snorts that Leslie Moore has sacrificed "the best years of her life to nursing...[a man] who hadn't any claim on her! Oh, drat the men! No matter what they do, it's the wrong thing. And no matter who they are, it's somebody they shouldn't be. They do exasperate me" (235). Thus, Dr. Gilbert Blythe's male superiority seems less certain after Montgomery pointedly reinforces first Anne's belief in it and then Miss Cornelia's disbelief.

Montgomery's journals show that no matter what her thoughts were she

comported herself as a highly conservative woman, not as a rabble-rousing women's rights firebrand. When Emily wrote in her diary that "it is a tradition of New Moon that its women should be equal to any situation and always be graceful and dignified" (*Emily climbs* 8), she was voicing Montgomery's own personal credo. Montgomery simultaneously admired suffragettes and looked askance at them. It is only honest to say that she was ambivalent about many of the social conventions she criticized. For instance, she thought she should obey her husband and accept his decisions even when she did not agree; she apparently maintained this belief even when he sank into irrationality with his mental problems. However, even though she let him make the decisions, people who remember them, and knew the family dynamics, say that the force of her opinion, even if unexpressed, was so strong that he could not fail to take it into account in making up his own mind. However, as her husband receded deeper into mental illness, she took over more of the decision-making process although she always attempted to make him feel the final word had been his.

The training she had had as a child continued to influence her to conform to social norms, but her reason told her that it was wrong for an intelligent woman to have to accept her husband's every decision as superior. It is her conscious mind that so deftly exposes the irrationality of the myth of male superiority in her writing while Miss Cornelia, like a funny subconscious, has the last word.

A **seventh** subversive strategy is a curious one. Montgomery often presents her most overbearing authority figures in women's clothing. In fact, there aren't many convincingly realistic men in Montgomery's narratives, and the ones who are there are often minor or shadowy characters. On the other hand, there are two types of very realistic women: the submissive, feminine types and the authoritarian mannish types who mimic the male prerogative to rule. Her fiction often presents two sisters who live together: one rules and the other submits. Such is the case in the *Emily* books, and we are told explicitly several times that Aunt Elizabeth Murray, who is the tall, angular authority figure, is made in the image of her formidable father, Archibald Murray. Aunt Elizabeth bosses little Emily about, making her life miserable through her authoritarian ways. Aunt Elizabeth's autocratic behaviour would have been unnoteworthy in a man of the time, but it looms unnatural and unacceptable in a woman. The reader can see how grotesque the behaviour is precisely because a woman enacts it. As a foil for mannish Aunt Elizabeth, Montgomery gives us Aunt Laura who is gentle, sympathetic and feminine. Montgomery can present what she considers objectionable authoritarian male characteristics with impunity because she disguises them in the female form of Elizabeth Murray, chip off the block of old Alexander Murray.

An **eighth** strategy is to embed allusions and references to other authors and books – often subversive – throughout the text; if the reader knows the other works, these comment indirectly on the action within Montgomery's

story. For instance, Montgomery read, reread, and was deeply moved by Olive Schreiner's *The story of an African farm* (1883), a novel which, between 1883 and 1900, sold over 100,000 copies and upset most of the orthodoxies of its Victorian age (Pierpont 69-83). Montgomery's reference to it in *Emily's quest* bears curiously on what happens to one of the important characters, the impossibly jealous and neurotic Mrs. Kent, whose husband had left her years earlier. We wonder if Montgomery may have intended to suggest that Mrs. Kent's whole life might have been less miserable had she had only opened Schreiner's book after it was returned to her among her dead husband's effects. It contained a letter from her husband forgiving her for what appears to have been her possessive, manipulative behaviour. We can conjecture that when *he* read Schreiner, he may have developed new sympathy for women and then have been able to forgive his wife, for one of Schreiner's main aims in this novel was to show how badly men treated women.

A subtle but perceptible intertextual discourse also operates between Montgomery's *Emily* books and other women-authored narratives which also deal with the way a woman can get on in a world which sees her as worthless unless she obtains a man and becomes his property. All her life Montgomery had been fascinated by the Brontë sisters. Her allusions to *Jane Eyre* figure large in the *Emily* books. When this trilogy was written in the 1920s, Montgomery had barely escaped marriage to one self-absorbed man, Edwin Simpson, and she had been yoked in her marriage for over a decade to a minister whose mental illness brought on another destructive kind of turning inward. It is no accident that elements of the similarly self-absorbed minister St. John Rivers appear in Emily's lovers, particularly Dean Priest. In fact, Montgomery wants to make sure that we don't miss the connections between her book and Brontë's. For instance, when Dean first saves Emily from falling into the ocean, he claims her life as his. Significantly, she fell only because she had reached over a dangerous cliff to pick a beautiful wild aster. Dean remarks: "'Your life belongs to me henceforth. Since I saved it it's mine. Never forget that.'" Emily felt an odd sensation of rebellion. She didn't fancy the idea of her life belonging to anybody but herself" (*Emily of New Moon* 281).

Dean sees this and says jokingly, "'one pays a penalty when one reaches out for something beyond the ordinary. One pays for it in bondage of some kind or other. Take your wonderful aster home and keep it as long as you can. It has cost you your freedom'" (281).

Montgomery as narrator tells us that, "He was laughing – he was only joking, of course – yet Emily felt as if a cobweb fetter had been flung round her. Yielding to a sudden impulse she flung the big aster on the ground and set her foot on it...." Dean "stooped and picked up the broken aster. Emily's heel had met it squarely and it was badly crushed. But he put it away that night between the leaves of an old volume of *Jane Eyre*" (282). This reference makes clear that Dean, like the would-be master of "Jane Eyre," wants to take

his little wild flower and press her between the leaves of his own life. There would be no room for a woman's growth, either in marriage to Brontë's Rivers or to Montgomery's Priest.

Maud Montgomery had been a bookish child and young woman who lived vicariously and intensely in the fictional worlds she read about. It is not surprising, therefore, that the febrile language in *Jane Eyre* echoes faintly through Montgomery's description of her own wedding day in her journal:

> ...sitting there by my husband's side...I felt a sudden horrible inrush of *rebellion* and *despair. I wanted to be free*! I felt like a prisoner – a hopeless prisoner. Something in me – something wild and free and untamed – something that Ewan had not tamed – could never tame – something that did not acknowledge him as master – rose up in one frantic protest against the fetters which bound me. At that moment if I could have torn the wedding ring from my finger and so freed myself I would have done it! But it was too late – and the realization that it was too late fell over me like a black cloud of wretchedness. I sat at that gay bridal feast, in my white veil and orange blossoms, beside the man I had married – and I was as unhappy as I had ever been in my life (May 23, 1911).

Montgomery's words in her journal depict how a gifted and imaginative female artist of her era must have felt when she entered into a traditional marriage. By the time of her marriage Montgomery had become a world-famous author with a large private income, and she knew she was marrying a stodgy man who was well educated in theology but who had no wider intellectual interests: he was kind and not unintelligent, but otherwise unexceptional. When she sat down a decade later and penned her story of little Emily, she remembered all her own decisions and the hardships she had gone through to become and remain a writer. On July 20, 1922, she wrote in her journals, "I packed *Emily [of New Moon]* off on her journey to the portals of the world – dear little *Emily* whom I love far better than I ever loved *Anne*. I felt as if I were sending part of myself..." On August 29, 1923, after *Emily* begins getting good reviews, she admits in her journal, "Emily's inner life was my own, though outwardly most of the events and incidents were fictitious."

It is instructive, in this context, to note the journal comments that she makes about her husband at the time she is writing *Emily*. On March 25, 1922, she writes:

> Whenever we have been anywhere that an allusion was made to my literary success Ewan has invariably greeted it with a little jibe or deprecating joke....Ewan's attitude to women – though I believe he is quite unconscious of this himself – is that of the medieval mind. A woman is a thing of no importance intellectually – the plaything and servant of man – and couldn't possibly do anything that would be worthy of a real tribute....Ewan has never had any real sympathy with or intelligent interest in my literary work and has always seemed either incredulous or resentful when anyone has attributed to me any importance on the score of it.

Thus, we can see that in writing her own story into Emily's, Montgomery is affirming the importance of her own individuality as a writing female. As well, the perceptive adult reader can see that not only is *Jane Eyre* a presence in Montgomery's *Emily* series, but the character of Jane Eyre is a presence in Montgomery's own mind. Brontë's character gave young Maud a model of female independence which took root and grew in both Montgomery and "Emily." Jane's language shaped Montgomery's, and Jane's struggle to develop and affirm her personal worth informed Montgomery's personal conception of female possibility and strength. Intertextuality is both literary and personal.

We now come to Montgomery's **ninth** strategy. She writes the expected "happy endings" which reassure her readers, but she even undercuts these in some of her novels. Montgomery's happy endings do not necessarily betoken sentimentality. She knew too well how to introduce hidden agendas – "discourses of rebellion" under the "discourses of submission." Montgomery does this not only with the controlling structure of her novels but also with the specific motif of the happy ending of marriage to which her heroine must submit.

Rachel DuPlessis notes in *Writing beyond the ending* that in a patriarchal society a female artist's *bildung* is antithetical to marriage. Marriage requires self-sacrifice and submission, whereas becoming a writer-artist demands self-assertion. In fact, marriage usually becomes a barrier to female achievement for any ambitious and gifted woman in a patriarchal society. This is very noticeable in the conclusion of the *Emily* series, a trilogy which makes up a Künstlerroman.

Emily Bird Starr, the sensitive and artistic little girl whose beloved father is dying, is left to be raised by her dead mother's clan, the Murrays, a threesome consisting of the two sisters, Aunt Elizabeth, Aunt Laura, and "simple" Cousin Jimmy. Cousin Jimmy is dominated by the authoritarian and aggressive Elizabeth, but he is in fact far from simple: he gives Emily the needed paper on which to write and he softens Emily's painful encounters with Aunt Elizabeth by his commonsensical advice. The Murrays are proud of their "traditions," but Aunt Elizabeth is so inimical to an imaginative life, and most specifically to creative endeavour, that she makes Emily promise to give up writing stories in exchange for permission to go to school.

In the first two *Emily* books, Emily runs the whole gamut of barriers to female artistic achievement. She is belittled, ridiculed, bullied, forbidden to write, even forbidden to think, mostly by Aunt Elizabeth. Predictably, she seeks an escape. As soon as she is old enough, she accepts an unfortunate engagement to Dean Priest[19] who offers Emily enormous wealth and his all-consuming passion; *all* he asks is that she pour the passion she has for writing into loving him, and that she forget her writing completely, *forever*. Dean tricks Emily into believing that she cannot write because he is jealous of her love for her writing. He demotes her to a sex-object by telling her, "You can do more

with those eyes – that smile – than you can ever do with your pen" (*EQ* 37). Later he says of her first unpublished novel which she gives him to read,

> It's a pretty little story, Emily. Pretty and flimsy and ephemeral as a rose-tinted cloud. Cobwebs – only cobwebs. The whole conception is too far-fetched. Fairy tales are out of the fashion. And this one of yours makes overmuch of a demand on the credulity of the reader. And your characters are only puppets. How could you write a real story? You've never *lived*.

Only after she breaks her engagement with him, does he tell her the truth:

> You remember that books of yours? You asked me to tell you the truth about what I thought of it? I didn't. I lied. It is a good piece of work – very good. Oh, some faults in it of course, – a bit emotional – a bit overstrained. You still need pruning – restraint. But it is good. It is out of the ordinary both in conception and development. It has charm and your characters *do* live. Natural, human, delightful. There, you know what I think of it now." (111)

For all his deception, however, Dean has helped her mature and come to some degree of self-understanding; yet, he embodies the worst features of both the early Rochester and St. John Rivers, the suitors in *Jane Eyre*. Marriage and men threaten Emily even more than mannish Aunt Elizabeth did. Aunt Elizabeth only stiffened Emily's resolve; Dean destroyed her courage.

At the end of the *Emily* trilogy, Emily will of course have to find a man who can be her master; she will have to settle down to focusing on him and their marriage and not on her own art. The happy ending will restore the social order where women and children are in their proper place. If Montgomery is going to satisfy her readers, her young heroines must come around and do what their culture demands of them: get married to promising young men rather than strike out on their own. In the genre of the domestic romance, the closure of marriage rewarded good girls. The closure of marriage was both Montgomery's and Emily's fate. However, it is clear that Montgomery does not believe that a woman's wedding day is always the dreamy ideal ending of "romance". By the time that she was writing her *Emily* series, she could see what a mistake she had made in her own marriage.

Although Montgomery had read feminist texts in the 1890s, she had been thoroughly indoctrinated during her childhood with the "Angel in the House" ideology – that a woman's place was in the home and that her duty was to be cheerful and long-suffering.[20] She noted in her October 15, 1908, journal entry that a reviewer praised *Anne of Green Gables* because it "radiates happiness and optimism." She continued: "Thank God, I can keep the shadows of my life out of my work. I would not wish to darken any other life – I want instead to be a messenger of optimism and sunshine" (339, *The selected journals..., Volume I.*) There was a connection between her role as a woman in being cheerful and her role as an author in putting cheerful "endings" onto her books, as

the romance required. But by the time that she was writing *Emily* in the 1920s her own experience in marriage, and her observation of other marriages, made it very clear to her that marriage and a woman's subservience in it did not always lead to happiness. In the last section of *Emily's quest* we see her using two techniques to undercut her "happy ending."

First, she embeds a metafictional discourse on happy endings in the actual text. In Chapter 17 a self-important male author proposes to Emily who herself is already a published and best-selling author. His proposal concludes with the gushy endearment that he will teach her "never to write happy endings – never....I will teach you the beauty and artistry of sorrow and incompleteness. Ah, what a pupil you will be! What bliss to teach such a pupil! I kiss your hand" (155). Emily punctures his pompous proposal with the statement that he "must be crazy" and boots him out, giving him the real-life jolt of a beautifully tragic ending for his would-be romance. The scene is very comic and reflects a bitter clash in the real world between women like Montgomery who were patronized for writing romances and male writers who wrote only realism, following the dictates of the then-trendy literary Modernism.

Montgomery's second trick for undercutting the unpalatable closure is to shift into farce and make the wedding ceremony in *Emily's quest* so ridiculous that all semblance of the earlier seriousness in the novel is lost. A cultural historian might say that Montgomery's own era should have found the marriage of Emily very satisfactory: Teddy has become a distinguished artist and he has been made even more respectable by being offered an art-school vice-principalship in Montreal. I cannot accept that Montgomery herself saw the ending as idyllic, however, for the trilogy's tone shifts rapidly. The first two Emily books were firmly grounded in PEI society, circa 1890, with local colour and vivid characterization. The conversations between characters were tart and plausible, and the events believable. Yet, the last Emily book slides into a comedic mode. Its dénouement is more than unbelievable coincidence – it is pure slapstick, with shifts in romantic partners, as in Shakespeare's *A midsummer night's dream* – a play that Montgomery had loved as a young student, by the way. Just as Emily's best-friend Ilse is on the point of marrying Teddy Kent, long a suitor of Emily, Ilse jumps out the window, slides down the roof in her silk wedding dress, and vanishes into the distance, leaving a room of gaping wedding guests and a surprised bridegroom behind. This ending is so ridiculous and so fast-paced that the seriousness of the situation is completely trivialized. The marriage vows are put into a farcical context. Lest the reader miss the shift of tone, Montgomery has the jilted groom speak of his intended having "left...[him] at the altar according to the very formula of Bertha M. Clay," a formulaic and now forgotten writer.[21] No further apologies are given, but Montgomery has made it very clear that she is not responsible for such a trite ending. The trite is identified with this dollop of slapstick and hence subverted. By alerting the readers to the fact that she does

not take the ending of her novel seriously, Montgomery suggests that they should not either. When Emily finally accepts the jilted Teddy, no idyllic atmosphere is restored. In fact, the tone is almost elegiac against the backdrop of a dark hill and a sunset, as Teddy and Emily prepare to move into their grey house which, significantly, has always been called "The Disappointed House." Montgomery tells the reader that the "grey house will be disappointed no longer," but the reader knows that Emily's creativity will sink into grey domesticity within. The vivacious outspoken Emily-heroine with the accomplished and witty pen is dead, and the trilogy can end: she is no longer interesting or full of promise as a writer. She is ready to be a supportive wife whose husband's profession comes first.

It is important to note that writing her fictions normally provided Montgomery with a soul-satisfying escape from the tensions in her real life, but writing *Emily's quest* seems to have been a trial, not a joy. In fact, and not surprisingly, she suffered unusual blockage before she began it, and had to write another novel which unblocked her first. It must have been a grim day for her when she sat down to begin *Emily's quest*. First she had to domesticate Emily. This meant that Emily had to give up her ambitions to write. Dean Priest had to persuade her that because she had no talent she should give up her writing for marriage. That was the first step. He succeeded in convincing her to destroy the manuscript of her first book. Then came step two. Emily tripped over a sewing basket at the top of the stairs, tumbled down, and landed with a pair of scissors piercing her foot. Scissors, a symbol of woman's domesticity, appropriately gave her blood poisoning. She had to spend her winter in bed recuperating. Her "rest-cure" sounds rather like those proscribed by the real life Dr. Weir-Mitchell who was the apparent model for Charlotte Perkins Gillman's famous feminist story "The Yellow Wallpaper."[22] Montgomery's imagery makes *her* opinion of Emily's choice quite clear.

Not only did it go against the Montgomery grain to submit Emily to a formulaic happy-wedding ending. It was painful for Montgomery to make her feisty little alter-ego into a creature of bland domesticity. Certainly, the self-assertive Emily of the first two books would not have been a suitably selfless wife, an "Angel in the House."[23] Montgomery's beloved Emily was already – as she herself had been – a successful author when it came time to marry her into oblivion and to end the book. It would hardly do for Emily to feel as she, Maud Montgomery, had at her own wedding. Thus, Teddy Kent, Emily's intended, had to subsume Emily's role as the artist figure.

She knew from personal experience that no creative female would want to give up writing when it was her income, her means of self-expression, and her very identity. So she tried to suggest that Emily's uniqueness would live in Teddy's art: he would take his inspiration from Emily's face and its "elusive mystery." If Emily had not been an artist in her own right, this might have been acceptable, but since she was, it was problematical to reduce her to an

object, a beautiful human face, which a male artist could turn into something timeless, a pictorial icon. Elevating Teddy's painting over Emily's writing is simply not satisfactory, and it was little wonder that Montgomery had a hard time finishing off the final book. On June 30, 1926, she wrote grimly: "I began work – again – on *Emily III*. I wonder if I shall *ever* get that book done!" On October 13, 1926, she breathed a sigh of relief: "Yesterday morning I actually finished writing *Emily's quest*. Of course I have to revise it yet but it is such a relief to feel it is off my mind at last. I've never had such a time writing a book. Thank heavens it is the last of the Emily series" (unpublished journals).

In the third Emily book, after numerous other proposals, Emily manages to marry a childhood friend, Teddy Kent, an artist of growing fame. Of the choices Emily has, Teddy is the only serious contender.[24] The only problem with him is that he is totally absorbed in himself and his own art. Although he puts Emily's haunting face into every picture that he paints, it is not clear that he ever sees the real Emily, though Montgomery makes various attempts to redeem him as a suitable groom. Just as Montgomery's husband was absorbed by the demons in his mental illness at the time she was writing this series, Teddy is absorbed by his own creative life. Many young girls reading the *Emily* trilogy today have told me that they feel vaguely unhappy with the way the novel concludes, though it is idyllic on the surface.[25] Their uneasiness comes from the implication that Emily's creativity will be eclipsed in marriage.

Finally, we come to a very complicated technique which is perhaps less a conscious strategy than a telling sequence. The order in which Montgomery's *Emily* books are written reveals how complex the creative processes become when Montgomery had to pack her material into an inappropriate genre.

We recall that the first *Emily* book was published in 1923, the second in 1925, the third in 1927. It is extremely significant, then, that in 1926 – after the first two *Emily* books and before the third – Montgomery stopped to write *The blue castle*. I think that Montgomery had simply poured too much of her own psychic energy into Emily's successful assaults on the patriarchal culture which sought to marginalize women and especially female artists. She hated to face the inevitability of leading Emily to the sacrificial altar of marriage. Emily was posited in the first two books as fighting for her artistic life and wanting to be taken seriously as a writer. Emily's world had been all against her; and in spite of this she had achieved a legitimate existence as an artist-figure, a writer of note. Now, literary convention demanded that Emily's self-development be effaced, with her literally reduced to being an inspiring female "face" in a male artist's repertoire. Montgomery did not want to kill Emily's spirit. But this is what the genre dictated, and what her publisher and readership expected. She had no alternatives.

Thus, *The blue castle* comes next instead of *Emily's quest*. What is *in* this book which interrupts Emily's tale, and permits Montgomery to forestall Emily's inevitable fate of marginalization and effacement? Tucking *The blue*

castle in before the third Emily book, Montgomery blows off the steam that had been gathering as she faced the unhappy prospect of marrying off Emily. *The blue castle* becomes part of the *Emily* series: the foursome forms a critique of patriarchal society.

The blue castle is an unadulterated and bitter assault on the patriarchal system of Montgomery's era, one which oppressed women psychologically and economically. In *The blue castle*, Montgomery sublimates the anger she feels towards her own maternal uncles and her maternal grandfather. The first part of *The blue castle* shows the heroine, Valancy Stirling, oppressed by an entire clan, men and wives alike, because she has failed to catch a husband. The reader hears every vicious comment that is made to her. Her relatives belittle her, chastise her, shame her. Montgomery downplays the bite of her satire, as she often does, through the use of humour, but the reader ascertains that the author of this book was one very angry woman when she wrote those wickedly funny lines. In no other book does Montgomery's anger come through so clearly.

The second phase of the plot shows Valancy doing the worst things she can do, as far as her clan is concerned. She asserts herself and leaves; she commits the scandalous act of nursing a dying girl who gave birth out of wedlock;[26] she proposes to a man of unknown and doubtful character and marries him. As long as Valancy had been among them, the clan could enjoy pecking at her wounds, but after she escapes they are without their victim.

The first part of the novel reads as sharp social satire, and it seems that Montgomery might herself be moving to the realistic novel which was then in vogue. Suddenly, Montgomery changes the tone of the novel, and shifts back to the easy flow of romance. Valancy marries, is thoroughly and completely happy in her marriage, and she spends all of her time in domestic bliss. It's rather startling to have the tone and genre change so suddenly. To satirize marriage and patriarchy and then dump one's heroine into a marriage seems odd, to say the least. However, there are some references to the Bluebeard legend, and the reader does begin to wonder what Valancy's husband keeps in the room he will not allow her to enter. Perhaps this wayward Valancy will end up dead, as indeed she should, since she has flaunted social convention.

Finally, in the last 30 pages, so many improbable coincidences and surprises occur that even the most gullible reader knows that Montgomery is playing games. This novel which began as an angry and biting satire of a patriarchal society ends up as a spoof on romance. Or perhaps it is a joke on the reader who demands romance, for the man Valancy has married turns out to be a writer of books which are remarkably like Montgomery's own. He writes purple passages about nature and he espouses "female" values like sensitivity and nurturing. He is as gentle as the patriarchal uncles and their accommodating wives were overbearing. If Emily's Aunt Elizabeth was a man in woman's clothing, Valancy's husband is a woman in man's clothing. It's

Montgomery's transvestite trick again, her playing with the gender stereotypes of her era. Among other things, Valancy's husband has rejected the values of his father, a wealthy entrepreneur and businessman: the world of power, money, and of "real" men. But since he will still inherit his father's millions, Valancy's grasping, materialistic clan is delighted and they make utter fools of themselves in turning about-face. Thus, Montgomery gives her publishers and readers their happy ending of marriage, but she undercuts the stereotypical image of masculinity as much as she can when she devises her hero. It's not unlike Charlotte Brontë's alteration of Rochester into a different kind of man at the end of *Jane Eyre*. Montgomery emasculates her man, too, into a sensitive person with the values that her patriarchal society would restrict to sentimental women.

In *The blue castle* other disjunctive elements are used: Valancy gets married in green, with an unkempt groom who has agreed to marry her out of pity. In the end, romantic love does release Valancy, as Montgomery herself believed it should, if one only found and married the right partner. But the ending has complex undertones, as does the entire novel.

Thus, when Montgomery began the novel in a realistic mode, but shifted to the unbelievable coincidences of romance, she created subversions which eroded the trajectory of romance, while conforming to it outwardly. Her discourses are not only the obvious ones put into the characters' mouths, but they are of a more subtle order – between the conventions of realism and those of domestic romance. She satisfies her readers and has her revenge at the same time.

It is likely that Montgomery dispelled some of her own pent-up anger in the actual act of writing out *The blue castle*. When her lampooning of the uncles threatened to become too virulent, Montgomery softened her attack with humour, effectively telling the readers that she did not mean what she was saying. And she reverted to her genre of domestic romance partway through the novel. Montgomery was cautious and conventional as a minister's wife and too much in need of money, as well, to risk sustained vicious satire. She did not want to alienate her readers or her publishers. But she was too angry to completely repress her feelings. We glimpse these in *The blue castle*. Hence, its power. Many, many Montgomery fans say it is their favourite book. So does, perhaps, the entire nation of Poland which voted the play based on it as the most popular musical stage play in Poland in 1990.

At the beginning of this article, I spoke about Montgomery's books having a political dimension in Poland.[27] I only began to feel *The blue castle*'s power when I viewed it on the stage in Poland in 1984, when Russian communism still oppressed the Polish nation, and Lech Walesa's Solidarity was pitted against the official government. This musical had its Cracow premiere in 1982, and has continued playing continuously as one of Poland's most successful stage plays since then. It had an especial bite because of its production in his-

torical Poland. The Polish *Blue castle* took on the aura of allegory when it pitted the powerful clan against the powerless Valancy. On stage, Valancy seemed to symbolize the Polish nation as she sang hopelessly of her "blue castle" where she could have freedom from the overbearing, restrictive, destructive clan which policed her actions and thoughts. Her voice and the music became a disembodied longing for freedom from centuries of oppression all massed into and represented by her horrible clan. The play had a subtext which the Polish nation well understood, having lived in the crossroads of Europe under the heels of invaders for centuries. Polish theatre had been long accustomed to speaking its politically dangerous frustrations and anger through theatrical subtexts, and Montgomery's *The blue castle* provided the perfect vehicle. How could their censors object to this harmless fiction about 19th century Scots in Canada? It was just a sentimental love story, at least on the surface! I shall never forget the atmosphere in the Cracow theatre when Valancy freed herself from the clan, became self-determining, and sang of her freedom: it was as if – for the moment, at least – the people in the audience dared hope that they, too, might eventually achieve what Valancy had achieved – freedom from oppression. The atmosphere was charged with energy as the glorious and triumphant music swelled and rolled over the audience.

Those of us who saw the production were quite surprised that Montgomery's book had become part of a subversive political agenda in Poland and that she was such a cult figure there. Her books were in such short supply that whenever the publishers acquired enough paper to print more, they then sold through the Polish underground. It was even more surprising to learn that the government had tried (unsuccessfully) to block Montgomery's books after World War II.[28] Montgomery – the woman Canadians thought wrote only *sentimental fictions for children*? I recall Montgomery's words in *Emily's quest*: "she [Emily] must reach her audience through many artificial mediums" (2). The political conditions of 1980's Poland do not operate in Canada. Nevertheless, an attack on authoritarianism appeals to children and women who have felt oppressed: all can see their own enemy in Montgomery's story if they choose to.

Thus, we can see how Montgomery's various methods provide a critique of the values of her patriarchal society. In these books, she turns her closures into farce. She uses the hackneyed plots of romance, but her stories push against these formal constraints. Her allusions, references, images, and comments threaten again and again to disrupt the trajectory of romance – if in no other way than by sending the reader off into a search for significant intertextualities. The energy in her books comes partly from these collisions between genre and subject. Thus, her narratology is far more sophisticated than appears on the surface. When Montgomery begins her *Emily* novels with a realistic heroine whose "Bildung" into a female-artist figure is incompatible with her inevitable fate (marriage), she challenges her culture's views about women.

Montgomery plays the literary and social games of her society with superb finesse, producing novels that conform on one level to the expected conventions while at the same time skilfully subverting the triteness of the domestic romance.

She may have written, as she tells us, in an "artificial medium," but behind it we find that L.M. Montgomery is a cleverly political writer who used the material of women's domestic lives to question their inferior status in a patriarchal culture. She stole by stealth into the august house of fiction where 19th century female writers like Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë had already staked out claims to small attic rooms while the male literary giants like Henry James and Thackeray held forth in the pretentious drawing rooms below. Entering this house in the early part of the 20th century, Montgomery found her own small room, decorated it simply, and established herself in it. She remained unobtrusive as she wrote easily and prolifically within the traditional genres of romance, camouflaging her subtle agenda of empowerment with humour and with the unpretentious language of the oral storyteller. Next door to her was Virginia Woolf, painfully toiling to find significant new forms, but writing out of many of the same concerns. What the serious male writers in the drawing rooms did not notice – they were too busy fulsomely discussing each others' books – was that much of their audience was slipping upstairs to listen to the tales of the scribbling women. These women were quietly creating a literature of their own.

NOTES

1 This article (excluding the Woolf material) was first given in March 1988 as an informal lecture at the University of Ottawa. An adaptation of one part of it was delivered as a formal conference paper at the International Research Society for Children's Literature in Salamanca, Spain, in September 1989.

2 Chapter 6, "To 'bear my mother's name': *Künstlerromane* by women writers," provides theoretical material that can be related to Montgomery's *Emily* trilogy.

3 Page references are to the 1970s McClelland & Stewart "Canadian Favourites" editions of each book.

4 Carol Shields was raised in Oak Park, Illinois, so her mother's comment reflects an American view.

5 A full-page article on Montgomery's reception in Sweden can be found in Ami Lönnroth's "Halva himlens frihetshjaltinna," *Svenska dagbladet*, March 8, 1991. The release of the Åhmannson book on Montgomery occasioned this full-page article in Sweden's foremost newspaper.

6 Newspapers and radio/television stations around the world gave coverage to the story. See newspaper accounts in: Ben Hills, "Thorn Birds Colleen in book plot row," *Melbourne Herald* (Australia) 19 Jan. 1988: 1-(?); "Is McCullough novel based on story by Green Gables' author?" *The gazette* (Montreal) 16 Jan. 1988: B-9; Anna Pukas, "The riddle of Ms. Thorn Birds!" *Daily mail* (London, England) 11(?) Jan. 1988: [page unknown]; H. J. Kirchhoff, "Echoes of Montgomery in McCullough novel?" *The globe and mail* (Toronto) 15 Jan. 1988: D 8. Radio Melbourne gave the controversy a thorough airing, as did stations in the United States and Canada. In Feb. 1988 an Australian TV crew came to PEI to explore similarities between McCul-

lough's book and Montgomery's for "Sixty Minutes," a current affairs program in Australia, and in Canada it was covered by CBC Television's "Fifth Estate."

7 Her statement to her publishers, Harper and Row (New York), made an excellent point which applies to many writers: "A creative writer is the sum total of what he or she absorbs from their earliest years. It goes without saying...that there are moments in any creative career when the subconscious resonates with buried data and out comes something new, but owing part of itself to what has gone before, whether in one's own life, or the lives of others, real or imagined."

8 For accounts of this, see Patricia Orwen's article "Kindred Spirits" and Kate Taylor's "Anne of Hokkaido."

9 Virginia Woolf's fiction is in the group with artificially stimulated sales because her books are on university courses.

10 Montgomery's journals recount how scholars like Prof. Pelham Edgar scorned her work during her Toronto years. Åhmannson's book gives a very good analysis of the critical reception of Montgomery's work.

11 When *The selected journals of L.M. Montgomery* were published, it was only one lone male reviewer who said that the "Introduction" should not have taken for granted that readers would actually know the Montgomery novels. Female reviewers of course did know them.

12 Elizabeth Waterston was the first scholar to give serious critical attention to Montgomery's work in a book entitled *The clear spirit: twenty Canadian women and their times*. This ground-breaking book was the Centennial Project of the Canadian Federation of University Women in 1966. But in 1966, well-meaning older male colleagues tried to dissuade her from wasting her time on Montgomery.

13 See Elaine Showalter's *A literature of their own* for an extended account of this.

14 And not only women authors of an earlier age. A contemporary Canadian playwright has mentioned to me that the *Emily* books were important to him because they showed one could get rejections and still be successful.

15 Bishop lists about 1500 books that Virginia Woolf refers to during her lifetime from all sources in his *Chronology*. Montgomery records the titles of approximately 500 books which she read between 1889 and 1942 in her journals, and she almost always discusses them. But she mentions having several thousand books at one time, and her son said she often read a book a day, even when busy. There is no comprehensive list of books she read compiled from other sources, but Rea Wilmshurst has been compiling a list of all the books alluded to (by name or by a quote taken from it). A checklist of books referred to in the *Anne* books appears in *CCL* # 56. Both Woolf and Montgomery were compulsive readers, but Woolf had access to outré books that Montgomery did not.

16 See Showalter, p. 33.

17 This story, adapted into a witty stage play by Charlottetown playwright Jane Wilson in 1990, played at the Charlottetown Festival mainstage.

18 For an explication of this, see Rosamund Bailey's article.

19 Showalter would undoubtedly put "Jarback" Priest in her second group of women's men, the "collateral descendants of Scott's dark heroes and Byron's Corsair, but direct descendants of Edward Fairfax Rochester" (139). She talks about how *Jane Eyre*'s influence became international, and these types of heroes appeared everywhere, showing their family-resemblance to his predecessors: they are "not conventionally handsome, and often downright ugly; they have piercing eyes; they are brusque and cynical in speech, impetuous in action. Thrilling the heroine with their rebellion and power, they simultaneously appeal to her reforming energies." They can be at once "'sardonic, sarcastic, satanic, and seraphic'" (140).

20 In fact, when she was interviewed in Boston, during a visit to her publisher in 1910, she was quoted as saying: "I am a quiet, plain sort of person and while I believe a woman, if intelligent, should be allowed to vote, I would have no use for suffrage myself. I have no aspirations to become a politician. I believe a woman's place is in the home" (Red scrapbook #1: 1910-1914). She probably believed this, at least in part, though the fact that she was pressed to make a public statement for a newspaper would have made her more conservative. By the mid-twenties, when she was writing the *Emily* trilogy, she has come to see how confining this ideology can be when a woman marries the wrong man in the wrong occupation.

21 In her diary entry of August 24, 1896, Montgomery is at Park Corner, everyone is away, and it is raining, and she says, "I have read everything that is readable in the house, including several 'shilling shockings' by Bertha M. Clay and others of that ilk, so you may realize to what straits I am reduced."

22 See an account of this in Showalter (274).

23 Showalter traces the development of this ideal of Victorian womanhood: "a Perfect Lady, an Angel in the House, contentedly submissive to men, but strong in her inner purity and religiosity, queen in her own realm of the House" (14).

24 Perry Miller did not have enough social status to deserve a Murray of "New Moon" although he had many positive merits.

25 A clipping in Montgomery's "Clipping Book" states: "L.M. Montgomery, whose charming story of love in an elysian Canadian summer 'Blue Castle' has just been published by Stokes, writes that she is busy now on the third Emily book and a 'dreadful time I am having, too, with all her beaux. Her love affairs won't run straight. Then, too, I'm bombarded with letters from girls who implore me to let her marry Dean, not Teddy. But she is set on Teddy herself so what am I to do? One letter recently was quite unique. All previous letters have implored me to write 'more about Emily, no matter whom she marries,' but the writer of this begged me not to write another Emily book because she felt sure if I did she would marry Teddy and she (the writer) couldn't bear it" (268, clipping book). Note: Montgomery blames the final marriage to Teddy on Emily who is a product of her culture. She as author does not defend it.

26 This feature resulted in *The blue castle* being subject to censorship after it was published. Several older women have told me that they were not allowed to read it.

27 An article in issue #46 of *CCL* presents many reasons why the Polish nation has taken a particular liking to Montgomery's works and *The blue castle* in particular. This article, written by Barbara Wachowicz, the Polish writer who adapted Montgomery's book into a musical stage play, was published in 1987, before the long dark "Stalinist night" was over and Communism collapsed. Her article stresses positive elements of Montgomery – her love of home, beauty, friendship, etc. – and skirts over any possible political innuendos.

28 There is an account of this in the Polish M.A. thesis mentioned earlier, and Barbara Wachowicz's article covers it, too.

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Feminine convention and female identity: The persistent challenge of *Anne of Green Gables*

Susan Drain

Résumé: *L.M. Montgomery propose des modèles de féminité de façon directe dans sa peinture des caractères et de façon indirecte par le recours à des métaphores.*

Surely no other novel of its period is as widely read today as Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* [1908] (Toronto: Ryerson, 1942). There are many reasons for this continuing popularity; among them must be the ambivalence of the novel's portrait of girlhood. The novel both conforms to and resists conventions; the resulting tensions, though seen somewhat differently at a distance of nearly a century, actually hold the novel together. As complex, as enfolding, and as domestic as the cotton warp quilts that Mrs. Lynde is knitting in the first chapter, the novel weaves intricate individual patterns on the standard feminine frame.

(Metaphors, as so often, are instructive here: the very term *warp*, the lengthwise threads which define the shape and size of a piece of weaving, carries with it the ambiguity of its less technical sense, the sense of distortion, of something twisted or "out of true". In the novel, as in the society it represents, as well as the society to which it still speaks, being female is to weave the individual weft through the social warp. The beauty and strength as well as the usefulness of those lives may still surprise those daughters and granddaughters who repudiate the traditional warp.)

Tracing how the novel's values work with and against the conventional is the essential preliminary to formulating a satisfactory definition of what is, in the novel's terms, essentially female. I say "in the novel's terms" deliberately; this differentiation and definition is, I contend, what readers do, as they respond more or less consciously to patterns in the novel and to the ways in which the novel interacts with patterns of expectations its readers bring. Whether or not its author intended, knew, or would recognize these patterns is irrelevant for my purposes; what is important is that the novel allows, even demands, exploration of the ideals and realities, both individual and social, of femininity and femaleness. Every young reader of the novel faces the developmental task of defining her female self in the contexts of her society; though the historical details have changed since the beginning of this century, the tensions and am-

bivalences implicit in the task remain recognizable and even reassuring to generations of readers.

Take, for example, the tensions in the handling of romantic love in *Anne*. Anne is only eleven at the beginning of the book, and to her, schoolroom gossip or "writing take-notices up on the wall about the boys and girls" is "the silliest ever" (139). Nevertheless, the theme has been introduced, even if light-heartedly. Any reader of romance, however, will immediately recognize that Anne's antipathy, her "icy contempt" (152), in fact, for Gilbert Blythe, is a common conventional prelude to true love. The theme is reintroduced from time to time, in Anne's determination not to acknowledge Gilbert's existence, at the same time as she strives to better him and to "keep ahead" of their class. However conventional the expected course of this true love, though, it is remarkable how evenly matched the characters are, both academically and morally. Neither has an advantage over the other. That is, though Gilbert had originally wronged Anne in taunting her, Anne in turn wrongs Gilbert by scorning his apology and offer of friendship, even after he has rescued her from a "watery grave" (286). Rivalry requires equality; romance does not, and it is rivalry, not romance, which gives interest to a story-line which, after Anne has outgrown her scrapes, would be in danger of becoming an unrelieved recital of Anne's successes. The potential romance of the relationship colours the rivalry between Anne and Gilbert; similarly the narrator's insistence on Anne's romantic immunity heightens the reader's tension:

> There was no silly sentiment in Anne's ideas concerning Gilbert. Boys were to her, when she thought about them at all, merely possible good comrades. (363)

Even when they are eventually reconciled, Anne says no more than that "we have decided that it will be much more sensible to be good friends in future" (396). This unromantic declaration protests too much: the novel manages both to thwart and to satisfy the reader who demands romance.

Just as the novel plays with rather than violates the romantic expectation, its handling of social conventions also repays sensitive attention. On the surface, the novel does not challenge conventional definitions or limitations. For example, Anne is not immune to the delights of fashion, and her preoccupation with the colour of her hair and the shape of her nose bears witness to the extent to which she has accepted a standard of female beauty from her romantic reading ("hair...of midnight darkness and...skin...a clear ivory pallor" (79)), which is much the standard of Avonlea prettiness – the "snap and colour...real showy" (318) which Mrs. Lynde admires. That is, Anne is both conventional in her wistful acknowledgement of the accepted definition, and unconventional in her individual appearance. It is reassuring to all ugly ducklings that Anne grows up to have her individual beauty acknowledged, but there is the bitterness of the anomaly here, reaffirming the conventional even as it acknowledges variation, isolating the individual in the public gaze.

The definition of gender roles is so inflexible as to resist even anomaly. Anne's arrival at Green Gables is an affront to the Cuthberts' expectations:

> We want a boy to help Matthew on the farm. A girl would be of no use to us. (33)

The best Matthew can suggest is that a girl could be "company" for Marilla. Eventually, of course, Anne is trained to the conventional standard, to be "a great help" to Marilla, able to make "hot biscuits...light and white enough to defy even Mrs. Rachel's criticism" (317). She is never a great help to Matthew, not even by milking the cows: her sex is apparently an insuperable impediment to her being anything to him but 'company.'

> 'If I had been the boy you sent for,' said Anne wistfully, 'I'd be able to help you so much more and spare you in a hundred ways.' (375-376)

Although kindred spirits find gender no barrier to their private relations, it remains an insuperable one in their public roles.

Anne's public self is restricted to a domestic sphere, but she does not deliberately reject that sphere nor chafe against its restrictions. Domesticity, however, is something that must be learned. Anne's "scrapes" show us her difficulties and her triumphs in learning these lessons: mixed-up bottles in the pantry, disastrous cake-baking, and tending to sick children. Incidents beyond the domestic sphere are rarely very active: Anne and Diana establish a playhouse among the birch trees; they scare themselves by imagining an haunted wood; they attend concerts and have a story club. When she does do something physically active or even risky, it is not something that she has herself initiated: walking the ridge-pole is a response to a dare, and ends in a tumble, not a triumph. Her near-drowning was an accident, the result of a leaky flat. This life-and-death episode, in fact, vividly illustrates tensions in the novel's portrait of Anne. She is set adrift, in the first place, because she is playing Elaine, the personification of female passivity and romantic hopelessness, but she demonstrates pluck, clear-headedness, and nimbleness:

> 'I prayed, Mrs. Allan, most earnestly...It was proper to pray, but I had to do my part by watching out and right well I knew it. I just said, "Dear God, please take the flat close to a pile and I'll do the rest," over and over again.' (285-286)

Her own resourcefulness, however, though necessary, is not sufficient to save her. God and Gilbert have to intervene.

For the most part, Anne does not so much do the unusual, as do the usual differently. Chiefly that difference consists of her being unlike her female peers, without being at all like the male. For example, all the schoolchildren loiter in the spruce woods over dinner hour, but though the girls manage to get back to the schoolroom on time, Anne returns late with the boys. She has

been more extreme than the girls, but she has not actually been boyish: she had not been climbing the trees like the boys, only "wandering...waist deep among the bracken, singing softly to herself" (146).

From the very beginning of the novel, Anne has been portrayed as different from, indeed, superior to, other girls, though they live within the same social roles. The first description of her concludes thus: "in short, our discerning extraordinary observer might have concluded that no commonplace soul inhabited the body of this stray woman-child of whom shy Matthew Cuthbert was so ludicrously afraid" (15). The narrator flatters the reader, by the implication that she is that "discerning extraordinary observer," into accepting without question from the beginning that Anne is an unusual girl. The reader's view is soon confirmed by Matthew:

> Women were bad enough in all conscience; but little girls were worse. He detested the way they had of sidling past him timidly, with sidewise glances, as if they expected him to gobble them up at a mouthful if they ventured to say a word. That was the Avonlea type of well-bred little girl. But this freckled witch was very different, and...he thought that he 'kind of liked her chatter.' (20)

Matthew's preference is echoed by Gilbert, who is struck by Anne's "big eyes that weren't like the eyes of any other girl in Avonlea school" (142), and by Miss Barry, who declares that she gets "tired of other girls – there is such a provoking and eternal sameness about them. Anne has many shades as a rainbow" (366). Even Mrs. Lynde concedes that "when Anne and [the other girls] are together, though she ain't half as handsome, she makes them look kind of common and overdone" (318).

Anne's uniqueness is a matter not only of "the effect produced by [her] slender white form and spiritual face" (348), but also of her personality. Surely Marilla is right to have misgivings: "Anne was such an odd girl. How would she get on with the other children?" (137). Although Anne does not fit Avonlea's or the reader's expectations of girlhood, the girls themselves are more accepting. They have room for her special talents, because, of course, they lack them. When Anne returns to school after her absence, she finds that "her imagination had been sorely missed in games, her voice in the singing, and her dramatic ability in the perusal aloud of books at dinner hour" (172). The girls show their appreciation of her in "feminine" and unoriginal ways: a cut-out flower for a desk decoration, and "effusion" painstakingly copied "on a piece of pale-pink paper," an old perfume bottle for slate water, and a "perfectly elegant new pattern of knit lace, *so* nice for trimming aprons" (172). These unimaginative, derivative expressions must be forgiven, however, for no one but Anne possesses any imagination. The Story Club is formed so that Anne can help Diana, and the others, cultivate their imaginative powers, but it is an uphill task: "I mostly always have to tell them what to write about, but that isn't hard for I've millions of ideas" (268).

Even when Anne is seen in a classic female nurturing role, nursing Minnie and May during a severe attack of croup, she is clearly superior to her peers. Neither Diana nor young Mary Joe exhibits anything like her competence, the "skill and presence of mind" (184) which earns her the approbation of the Spencervale doctor.

These examples confirm Anne's unusual status: she is bolder, more practical, more imaginative, and more decisive than her female peers, although she never sets foot outside the realm allotted to little girls. She is no tomboy. If Anne represents a desirable idea of the female, then that idea is defined only in differences: different not only from the masculine, but also from the conventional "feminine" as represented by the girls of Avonlea.

At the core of the novel, expressed in its very language, is a pervasive ambivalence about being female. To be a girl is to be a disappointment, not only because one is not the boy that society actively values, but because the reality of conventional girlhood in Avonlea is so pallid. Anne is distanced from that reality not only in all the ways just shown, but in the very terms used to identify her. Of course, the word "girl" is frequently neutral, merely distinguishing female from male children, but it is also frequently a term of depreciation.

Take, for example, the end of Chapter 16: "Diana is invited to tea," where Anne tries to explain to Mrs Barry that she had not intentionally "set Diana drunk." In two pages, Anne is referred to by her own name, and also as a "soul" (twice), a "girl" (twice), a "child" (three times, and once, as a "suppliant." "Soul" is a sympathetic term, used when Anne's feelings are to the forefront – "a very much distracted little soul" (166) and "'Poor little soul,' [Marilla] murmured" (168). "Child" is the only term (besides "suppliant") which is not qualified by "little;" it is the neutral term, though it takes colour from its context: Mrs. Barry's "such a child" (166) is negative, though unjust, whereas "the child's tear-stained face" (168) is sympathetic. Both examples of "girl," however, serve to diminish Anne. She herself uses it to humble herself before implacable Mrs. Barry: "Oh, Mrs. Barry, please forgive me....Just imagine if you were a poor little orphan girl" (166). But Mrs. Barry is not softened, and she dismisses Anne "coldly and cruelly: 'I don't think you are a fit little girl for Diana to associate with'" (167).

These variations are pervasive as well as subtle: when old Miss Barry ponders the influence Anne has on her, her use of "girl" and "child" reflects her improved opinion:

> I thought Marilla Cuthbert was an old fool when I heard she'd adopted a *girl* out of an orphan asylum...but I guess she didn't make much of a mistake after all. If I'd a *child* like Anne in the house all the time I'd be a better and happier woman. (302, emphasis added)

Miss Barry habitually refers to Anne as "you Anne-girl" (297), qualifying the generic with the individual. Similarly, in that first description of Anne (15) re-

ferred to above, the narrator, eager to portray Anne in a positive light, eschews the word "girl" in favour of the periphrasis "woman-child."

Significantly, it is only in the description of Anne's relation to Gilbert that Anne is explicitly described in a more stereotypical way than elsewhere. Before she actually meets Gilbert, she contradicts Diana's assertion that to be the "smartest girl in the school" (140) is "better than being good looking:"

> 'No, it isn't,' said Anne, *feminine to the core*. 'I'd rather be pretty than clever.' (140, emphasis added)

Similarly, when Anne comes to regret snubbing Gilbert, she does not admit it, save "deep down in her wayward, *feminine little heart*" (313, emphasis added). The reader is ruefully aware that Anne is fooling herself in the first case, and putting up a false front to fool others in the second. Thus, femininity, which seems ineradicably central ("core" and "heart"), is associated with insincerity. Here is the real danger of romance – the danger that the susceptible "feminine little heart" will betray even the self-possessed Anne.

The whole novel is shot through with this ambivalence, a reluctance to be identified with girlhood and an inability to step outside its confines. However, to reject the "feminine" and the "girlish" does not mean a repudiation of the "female." At the same time as to be a girl is less than desirable, the only real and strong characters in the book are the female ones. The men either do not really appear (like Thomas Lynde and Mr. Allan, both mere appendages of their wives) or are inadequate in various ways. The schoolteacher Mr. Phillips is unjust, inconsistent, sarcastic, and neglectful, except of Prissy Andrews for whom he has an unprofessional, and ridiculous, interest. Gilbert is too good to be true, a storybook hero, tall, "with curly brown hair, roguish hazel eyes, and a mouth twisted into a teasing smile" (141). Even Matthew, endearing as he is, is crippled by his extreme shyness.

Compared with the men, Marilla and Mrs. Lynde are strong, individual and vital. They have their weaknesses, but they are all of a piece, and undeniably real. Not all the women are so believable: Mrs. Allan and Miss Stacy, are, respectively, moral and intellectual ideals, but they exert a strong influence on those around them, and they have no male equivalents. Even the unpleasant Miss Barry has a snap and a humanity that Mr. Phillips, say, lacks.

Whether the generally unimpressive girls of Avonlea will in turn develop into such strong and interesting women as their elders is unclear. The organization of the Queen's class is a turning point for them all: Diana is prevented from further studies, "as her parents did not intend to send her to Queen's" (311). Jane and Ruby, like Anne, will study to be teachers. Here again, however, Anne is distinguished from her fellows. Whereas Ruby says "she will only teach for two years after she gets through, and then she intends to be married" (312), Anne looks forward to having a "worthy purpose" and a "noble profession" (311). Jane has another ambition; for her, teaching is neither a noble profession nor

a preliminary to marriage – it is a means of independence:

> Jane says she will devote her whole life to teaching, and never, never marry, because you are paid a salary for teaching, but a husband won't pay you anything, and growls if you ask for a share in the egg and butter money. (312)

The standard by which the girls' ambitions are measured, obviously, is marriage, though the male students are going to be ministers and members of Parliament. Anne's own early visions of the future had also been defined in terms of the likelihood or unlikelihood of marriage: at age eleven, she foresees marriage for Diana, but not for herself (152), unless it is to a minister who might not mind a red-headed wife, "because he wouldn't be thinking of such worldly things" (230). Before the Queen's class is organized, Anne admits to no larger future than living "together forever" with Diana as "nice old maids" (306). Her model, after all, is Marilla, who has broken Avonlea's usual pattern of womanhood by not marrying, although she conforms to it in every way as housekeeper for her brother. Anne's ambitions begin to stir, however; when the chance is offered "to go to Queen's and pass for a teacher" (309), she confesses that "It's been the dream of my life – that is, for the last six months" (310). She even begins to imagine the impossible: "If I were a man I think I'd be a minister...I think women would make splendid ministers" (320).

Eventually Anne's ambitions outstrip those of her female friends, when she dreams of winning the Avery Scholarship and studying at Redmond, but there occurs at this point in the novel a kind of failure of nerve, as the conventional values appear to reassert themselves. Marilla turns out to be single not by choice but by a stubborn mistake. Mrs. Lynde is gloomy: she "says pride goes before a fall and she doesn't believe in the higher education of women at all; she says it unfits them for woman's true sphere" (374). Ultimately, Anne renounces her plans and makes her commitment to Green Gables, a commitment which coincides with the beginning of a new relationship with Gilbert. Though Anne's youthful inclination was that "it's much more romantic to end a story up with a funeral than wedding" (267), the close of her own story looks suspiciously conventional.

The tension remains, however. Anne claims to be "just as ambitious as ever," and to have changed only the object of her ambitions, but this is her public statement. The reader is convinced that her private ambitions are unchanged, that the "*little* college course all by [herself]" (392) which will occupy her evening is more than the substitute for fancywork that she claims. The relationship with Gilbert is to be established on a basis of equality and shared interest: they have been well-matched as rivals and promise the same as friends and fellow students at home.

In short, when Anne chooses to stay home, she is not dwindling into a girl; instead she is continuing to construct her own female identity and future. It is neither conventionally feminine, nor masculine. It has room for both in-

dividual ambition and a commitment to others: she will continue her scholarly pursuits and she will preserve Marilla's eyesight and her home at Green Gables. Her own metaphor of the bend in the road (190) helps the reader as well as Anne to resist premature closure.

Mrs. Lynde, of course, sees Anne's decision as final and is relieved: "You've got as much education now as a woman can be comfortable with" (392). Although this declaration suggests that "woman's true sphere" (374), as Mrs. Lynde sees it, is restrictingly enclosed and confined, the reader and Anne would do well to judge by Mrs Lynde's practice rather than by her words.

For Mrs. Lynde, from the first chapter to the last, is the most individual, fully realized character in the book. She combines an inexhaustible domestic energy with insatiable curiosity and decided views about the community in which she is an active participant (some would say busybody) and about the larger world, too. Even when she is apparently cloistered, sitting at home "knitting 'cotton warp' quilts" (2), she maintains a comprehensive overview and understanding of "everything that passe[s]...and...the whys and wherefores thereof" (1). For Mrs. Lynde, woman's true sphere includes national politics and an up-to-date knowledge of all the disasters that happen outside Avonlea. The very irony with which she is described is a recognition of the contradictions of which she seems unaware. Thus, for example, although she thinks it a "scandalous thing" (320) for women to be ministers, the reader has no doubt that Anne and Marilla are right, though one is sincere and the other sarcastic, about Mrs. Lynde's fitness for, and unsanctified usurpation of, the task:

> 'I'm sure Mrs. Lynde can pray every bit as well as Superintendent Bell and I've no doubt she could preach too with a little practice.'
>
> 'Yes, I believe she could,' said Marilla dryly. 'She does plenty of unofficial preaching as it is. Nobody has much of a chance to go wrong in Avonlea with Rachel to oversee them.' (320-321)

Though by no means a universally satisfactory pattern of womanhood, the example of Mrs. Lynde – forthright, kind, critical, contradictory Mrs. Lynde, whose opinions are narrow but her involvement wide – is the best guide Anne has to what it is to be a fully realized woman. That Anne will do better than Mrs. Lynde in reconciling the contradictions and the tensions is the expectation with which the reader closes the book, but that the contradictions and tensions will persist is a certainty that accompanies that expectation. Whether in 1908 or nearly a century later, female identity can be constructed only in a context in which both resistance and commitment are possible, in order to free the unfeminine female from the limitations of conventional expectation.

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Alice of New Moon: The influence of Lewis Carroll on L.M. Montgomery's Emily Bird Starr

Robin McGrath

Résumé: *Certaines phrases d'*Anne aux pignons verts *faisant allusion à* Alice au pays des merveilles *font percevoir un processus d'intertextualité.*

Emily Bird Starr, the heroine of L.M. Montgomery's *Emily of New Moon*, is a very bookish young girl, whose writing is strongly influenced by what she reads. Behind the chintz-lined glass doors of the bookcases at New Moon are Thompson's *Seasons, Rob Roy, The Royal Road*, and *The Memoirs of Anzonetta B. Peters*, "who was converted at seven and died at twelve." But when Emily plunders the small resources of her aunts' library, it is "*Alice in Wonderland*, which is perfectly lovely" that captures her imagination. "I think I might be an Alice under more favourable circumstances," she writes to her dead father (*Emily 93*). In fact, Emily is Alice, as Montgomery makes clear to the careful reader, for Montgomery, like her child heroine, was quite capable of borrowing from writers she admired and she borrowed liberally from *Alice* for *Emily of New Moon*.

The identification several years ago of Colleen McCullough's unacknowledged use of L.M. Montgomery's *The Blue Castle*, for her novel *The Ladies of Missalonghi* sparked considerable debate about the whole issue of literary borrowing. Constance Classen, for instance, has shown that Montgomery obtained "raw materials" for *Anne of Green Gables* from Kate Douglas Wiggins' *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*, and supports her contention with "what appear to be 'verbal echoes' of *Rebecca* in *Anne*" (Classen 47). These echoes are not coincidental, nor does Classen suggest that readers would have recognized them as deliberate allusions to the earlier, widely-known *Rebecca*. But Classen does not imply that there was any real dishonesty in Montgomery's use of *Rebecca*; Montgomery used Wiggins' novel as a model for her own, no more.

Montgomery's use of *Alice in Wonderland* in *Emily of New Moon* is somewhat more complex than her use of *Rebecca* for *Anne*. *Alice* is a model, certainly, and there are fairly specific verbal echoes, but Emily is also a homage to Alice, and the allusions are intended to be noticed, at least subliminally. The connections between Montgomery's Emily and Carroll's Alice go beyond the passing reference of the homage, however. I would suggest that Montgomery was doing more than paying her respects to the author of the *Alice* books in

Emily of New Moon, for while using Alice as an inspiration for her portrait of the artist as a young girl, she comes to a very different conclusion about the duty, if not the nature, of the artist.

Before considering the similarities between Emily and Alice, it is perhaps best to keep in mind the obvious dissimilarities. First, Carroll's fragmented, episodic, dream-style is radically different from Montgomery's tight, occasionally tiresome plotting in which every "i" is dotted and every "t" crossed. Secondly, if Carroll was writing to a formula, it was a mathematical formula of some complexity; Montgomery was aiming to please a wide, popular audience, and she tailored the work to appeal very broadly by following a conventional pattern. Third, Carroll never wanted *his* model, Alice Liddell, to grow up, and rather lost interest in her when she did, while Montgomery's heroine grows more adult, book after book, until she finally manages to marry her off. Lastly, while both authors satirize the rigid, stuffy world of Victorian adult life, Carroll doesn't try to make Alice conform to it, while Montgomery slowly, unremittingly shapes Emily to fit in with the rest of the world. Thus, there are major differences – and also many very interesting similarities.

Emily, with her despised pinafore and her beloved cats, certainly bears a superficial resemblance to Carroll's Alice. Both lonely young girls amuse themselves by conducting "little cat dialogues" (*Emily* 47), with Emily addressing her remarks to Saucy Sal and Mike, and Alice confiding in Dinah and her kittens. Alice is "very fond of pretending to be two people" (*Alice* 33) while Emily talks to herself in a mirror and calls her image "Emily-in-the-glass" (*Emily* 5). However, it is in their artistic visions that the real similarity lies. In penetrating into the world of the imagination, Alice draws the curtain that covers the door to Wonderland (*Alice* 4), just as for Emily, the "world of which the flash has given her glimpses" is behind a curtain (*Emily* 18). These worlds are one and the same – the world of the writer's ego which both children recognize as deserving attention. Alice is so amazed at her own marvellous imagination that she says "There ought to be a book written about me...And when I grow up, I'll write one" (*Alice* 24). Emily agrees. "I am going to write a diary," she says "that it may be published when I die" (*Emily* 339).

Both Alice and Emily escape into their Wonderlands from worlds that are essentially boring. Alice is lying on a river bank, with her head in her sister's lap, peeping into a rather dull book. Emily is hidden away in the countryside with a devoted, ailing father, and although she has access to books, she lacks the company of other children. Emily's life is sparse, monotonous and restricted. Just as Alice tumbles down the rabbit hole, the death of her father tumbles Emily out of her safe little world into one inhabited by strange and unpredictable creatures. When the Murray relatives arrive to decide her fate over supper, Ellen Greene tells Emily that "There ain't room" at the table (*Emily* 30), just as the creatures at the Mad Hatter's tea party tell Alice that there is "No room!" (*Alice* 50). But Emily and Alice are stubborn, irrepressible

children and they somehow make a space for themselves in these worlds of the imagination.

Emily's journey of discovery, like Alice's, is in two parts; initially to New Moon and then to Priest Pond. Unlike Alice, who travels first into Wonderland where the rules she is familiar with are disregarded, and then to Looking-Glass Land where the rules are rigidly applied, Emily's journey is more circular. Emily goes from a fairly structured life with her father to the rigid discipline of New Moon and the schoolhouse, and only when she has learned to function within the confines of social order does she escape to the anarchic freedom of Priest Pond. By the time Emily has finished with Great Aunt Nancy, she is as glad to escape Priest Pond as Alice is to escape Looking-Glass Land, but both girls come back with greater insight into themselves, both are more mature.

Emily responds to the Murrays, a mixture of friendly and hostile personalities, much as Alice reacts to the creatures she encounters. She wishes the New Moon adults wouldn't call her "the child" (*Emily* 38) which is how the Queen of Hearts, the train guard and the fawn refer to Alice. Sleeping with Aunt Elizabeth is like being "in bed with a griffin," (*Emily* 57) and the Blair Water children are much like little animals; Ilse has paws (*Emily* 113), Teddy has a snout (*Emily* 289), and like Alice, Emily is called everything from a serpent to a crocodile (*Emily* 120). When the children play "damsel in distress" (*Emily* 182), Perry and Teddy wear tin boilers and saucepans for armour, in imitation of Tweedledum and Tweedledee (*Alice* 150). Gentle cousin Jimmy, who like the White Knight recites poetry after falling on his head, provides the little girl with support and companionship and receives, in return, her materialistic affection. Kindly alcoholic Mr. Carpenter with his bottle, fills in for the Caterpillar with his hookah – in Maritime Canada, a wood-louse or potato bug is commonly called a *carpenter*.

Just as the people take on animal characteristics at New Moon, the flowers take on personalities that correspond to those Alice encounters. In Wonderland, the tiger lilies display a fierce disposition while the roses are kindly; Emily reports from New Moon that she is "trying to love [the tiger lilies] because nobody seems to like them at all," but deep down in her heart, she "just can't help loving the roses best" (*Emily* 288-9). Emily's first published novel, *The moral of the rose*, brings to mind Alice's Duchess, who tells her in the rose garden that "Everything's got a moral, if only you can find it" (*Alice* 120), and who proceeds to demonstrate the maxim with irritating determination. One of Montgomery's earlier creations, Marilla Cuthbert, had already been compared to the Duchess.

The Murray woman are particularly reminiscent of the cross and autocratic women of Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land. "When I was a girl," says Aunt Ruth to Emily, "I never spoke until I was spoken to." Emily "argumentatively" replies that "if nobody ever spoke until they were spoken to there would be no conversation" (*Emily* 30). Aunt Ruth is echoing the Red Queen, who commands

Alice to "Speak only when you're spoken to," to which Alice responds with the "little argument" that "if you only spoke when you were spoken to...nobody would ever say anything" (*Alice* 318). Emily's blunt comments, and her habit of taking language literally, constantly offend her Aunt Elizabeth. When her aunt says "Night air is poison," Emily asks "What air is there at night but night air?" (*Emily* 56). When she is told "Don't ever let me see you kissing that cat again," Emily cheerfully agrees "I'll only kiss her when you don't see me after this" (*Emily* 62). Carroll would have been delighted with Emily's logic.

At New Moon, the looking glasses are not "hung low enough for [Emily] to see her reflection" (*Emily* 136), so it is on the way to Priest Pond that Emily slips back into the Looking-Glass Land. Through chance, she travels there with Old Kelly, the tinker, and he presents her with a dainty hairbrush that has a little mirror set into the back. Emily gazes into the mirror rapturously and cries; "Oh, thank you, thank you! Now I can have Emily-in-the glass whenever I want her" (*Emily* 236). At Priest Pond, Aunt Elizabeth's harsh rules are overturned and Emily is told "You can write what you like here – and say what you like – and do what you like" (*Emily* 241). This is, indeed, Wonderland for the curious, stifled little girl.

The house at Priest Pond, with its "miles of rooms and halls" (*Emily* 245), is just like the hall Alice finds at the bottom of her rabbit hole, but Emily, who has read *Alice*, at least has some warning of the peculiar world she is about to enter, and most readers, if they haven't already got *Alice* in mind, will think it too. Aunt Nancy's back parlour has a door with "a quaint old brass knocker that was fashioned like a chessy-cat, with such an irresistible grin that you wanted to grin too, when you saw it" (*Emily* 239). Inside is the formidable old woman who, in her own words, "queened" it over everyone (*Emily* 243).

Nancy and Caroline, who mirror Elizabeth and Laura, are red and white queens, as well as Duchess, cook and Queen of Hearts, all rolled together. As Emily tells her father, they are "very sarcastic to each other" and "fight quite frequently" (*Emily* 248) just like Carroll's old women. Caroline knits, just as the white queen does in *Alice* after she turns into a sheep (*Alice* 158), and Nancy plays cards to pass the day (*Emily* 251). Emily is "allowed to go into the kitchen to help Caroline cook" (*Emily* 250), but Caroline's mistakes with the soup vex Nancy, who is given to scolding the cook, just as the Duchess is (*Alice* 43). When Nancy offers Emily "another cooky," Emily reminds her resentfully that she hasn't had one at all (*Emily* 242); Alice is similarly offended by the March Hare's offer of "more tea" when she hasn't yet had any (*Alice* 101). When Emily finally leaves Priest Pond, she returns to a changed perception of herself. Her aunts argue about whether she has actually grown taller or if this is just an illusion, but they both see that she is "not the Emily who had gone there," she is "no longer wholly the child" (*Emily* 282).

It is at this point that we see rather less of Carroll's influence in *Emily* and rather more of Montgomery's. Emily has grown tired of the crazy old women

of Priest Pond, with their gossip and their quarrels and their unlimited freedom; she's glad to go home to the rules and the housework. Even more radical for this child with her unlimited curiosity is the discovery that sometimes the truth is better left untold. She is sickened and worried by the tale she has heard about Ilse's mother and wishes the old women had kept it to themselves. Even though Emily later proves the story to be untrue, the knowledge that people enjoy such malicious gossip is at the root of Emily's loss of innocence. Carroll's Alice is spared such a discovery while she is down the rabbit hole.

Emily of New Moon, as Montgomery acknowledged and as Tom Tauskey confirms, was her most autobiographical work, and it is in the light of this fact that we must consider her radical shift away from the *Alice* model. Carroll, an Oxford don with no dependents and an audience of his own choosing, perhaps saw no reason why Alice should grow up. Girls, and even women of Carroll's acquaintance, must have appeared to be very cosseted creatures, protected from the ugly realities of life. Montgomery had no such illusions. Abandoned as a child (in a psychological sense, at least), she took on the emotional and financial responsibilities of elderly grandparents, a mentally ill husband and dependent children. Time and again, Montgomery sacrificed herself and her work to the demands of family and social propriety. The part of Emily that is Montgomery does not reject the stultifying drudgery of housework and the stifling domination of her spinster aunts, as an Alice might have done. The triumph of Montgomery's characterization is that she convinces her readers that Emily can still manage to thrive and dream and write within the confines of such attitudes and expectations.

L.M. Montgomery has frequently been criticized for her decision to subordinate her art to her duty. Modern readers find it hard to accept Emily's promise to her aunt that she will not write fiction in exchange for the chance to go away to school, just as they find it hard to accept Anne Shirley's decision to return and care for Marilla when she has just won a scholarship. Montgomery, like her heroines, made a choice that a great many women and few men have made over the years – she put her family ahead of her work. Unfortunately, when the work is "art" such a decision is seen as a betrayal of a greater cause. What would be called admirable in a lawyer or an entrepreneur is treason in an artist. In *Emily of New Moon*, Montgomery is arguing that it is not only possible for some artists to compromise, it is necessary.

Emily, for all her compromise, is an artist. James Souchan, in "Alice's journey from alien to artist," examines Alice's need for both logical social order and uncontrolled play. Emily, too, has to put these two things in balance before she can climb the "alpine path" of the writer. At New Moon and Priest Pond, Emily learns how to play with other children, but she also learns how to do domestic chores and mask her unsociable feelings. Alice, according to Souchan, learns to transform her dream of "forbidden, socially destructive, 'monstrous' impulses" into "a highly organized work of art – the Looking glass story" (Sou-

chan 79). Emily, who is already self-consciously artistic, learns to pack pickles decoratively in a jar, to scrub the floor in a herringbone pattern, and to knit stockings with a cable stitch. She learns to combine work and play with adult control, all without losing the childlike sense of wonder that is her father's legacy.

Montgomery takes her final image of Emily's artistic aspirations and integrity from Carroll, whom she would have willingly acknowledged as the greater artist. Emily returns from Priest Pond to a new kitten and a room of her own, a room with a large mirror in which she can see all of herself, all of Emily-in-the-glass. Having survived her fall down the rabbit hole, Alice of New Moon is ready to climb.

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Nineteenth-century young women's diaries

Barbara Powell

Résumé: *L'auteur examine plusieurs journaux intimes canadiens du 19e siècle afin de montrer de quelle manière la langue reflète les attentes et les pressions culturelles exercées sur les jeunes femmes.*

On her sixteenth birthday in 1867 Hellen Bowlby began a new diary with the words that confidently established her identity and her place in the world:

> Hellen V. Bowlby
> Prospect Hill Seminary
> Silver Lake, Port Dover
> To be perused by the writer only[1]

Hellen is one of the few young women whose personal diaries now repose in public archives; also among them are Hellen's sisters, Hattie and Louisa. Her sister Louisa's diary, also written at Prospect Hill Seminary, begins with the assertion that it will be "Founded on facts;"[2] while their younger sister Hattie needed some help from a friend even to begin the task of recording her life: "Today I am sweet sixteen and I never was so old before. Emma German my old chum and I both concluded we begin a journal on our birthdays."[3]

None of these young sisters was destined to become a writer, despite these confident beginnings. The archives, as far as I know, hold no further written records of their lives; we can read only what they have defined and described in their adolescent diaries. These brief diaries, like those of other young girls now in public archives, are the sole texts of their creation, the only record of their personal stories. As personal records of a particular time and place, women's diaries have value not only as accounts of social history, but also as literary texts.[4] Like other literary texts, diaries reflect the context of their creation, or the "literary, cultural, and personal imperatives dictated by the writer's milieu" (Buss "Dear Domestic" 2). An important facet of the writer's milieu is the linguistic culture in which she writes. I began my study of these diaries because I wanted to understand this linguistic culture, to discover how young women viewed language use, and to extend the discussion of Canadian English to include more specific reference to the language of women.

Diaries are paradoxical texts for a linguistic study: they show features of both written and spoken English. Simply because they are written, they follow some of the rules for formal written English, which is usually used to con-

vey factual information.[5] But much of that factual information has been omitted from the diaries because they were primarily intended for the writers' eyes only. They require the reader now, over 100 years later, to guess about who the people mentioned are and what their importance was to the young writer.[6] Diaries, to a greater degree than many other written texts, depend upon a lost context for their meaning.

Diaries, although written, can also show many of the functions of speech, especially the function of speech in establishing and maintaining human relationships. Several of the writers shared their diaries with a friend; others treated the diary itself like a friend, chatting comfortably with themselves in their own words. Because of their personal subject matter, diaries are among the most intimate of texts, and are therefore subject to the ellipsis and suggestion of the most informal speech.[7] They also are sometimes written in the contemporary slang of their day, giving fresh voice to long-silent girls. Because they occupy an unusual stylistic middle ground, they can illustrate rules for both writing and speech in 19th century Canadian English.[8] They show both form and function of language in everyday life.

The young women whose diaries I read in the Public Archives of Canada and the Public Archives of Ontario were all in their teens between 1845 and 1885. Sophia MacNab, daughter of the politically and financially prominent Allan MacNab, kept a diary for seven months in 1846, during her emotional thirteenth year at Dundurn, near Hamilton, Ontario. Sixteen-year-old Mercy Ann Coles from Charlottetown, P.E.I., kept a diary of her trip to Quebec with her father, who was attending the Confederation Conference of 1864. At roughly the same time, young Louisa Bowlby was dutifully keeping a diary of her sixteenth year while attending Prospect Hill Seminary in Port Dover, Ontario. Louisa's two sisters, Hellen and Hattie, each kept a diary when they too reached sixteen (Hellen a few years later, Hattie a decade later). In 1879 fourteen-year-old Lizzie McFadden was travelling with her family from their home in London, Ontario to Prince Albert, in what is now Saskatchewan. She kept a careful record of the overland journey from Winnipeg to their new home in the Northwest Territories. Christina Bogart was sixteen when she began her diary in Granville Ferry, Nova Scotia in 1880; she continued her writing in her book just past her eighteenth birthday.

Although their diaries are the only written records these young women have left behind, they must have done other writing, especially in school or with their teachers, where they learned the rules for proper speech and writing. They were among the lucky ones, for very few young people in 19th century Canada had more than rudimentary education.[9] Most young people were educated in a haphazard fashion, either in a public-supported school if one was available in their community; or, more likely, in a private school; or, like Sophia MacNab, with a tutor hired by their family or a group of families.[10] The Bowlby family was wealthy enough to send all three daughters to a private female

seminary where they learned a combination of academic and "ornamental" subjects and presumably wrote diaries as part of a course of study.

The core of any school's course of study was basic reading and writing, and in Ontario, at least, the standard was established early. Ontario students, progressed through a series of standard readers, as did Maritime readers, with their Halifax editions of the same texts. The first were the Irish National School Books, which were adopted as the common school books in Upper Canada in 1846. By 1876 there was a Canadian version of the same; auxiliary texts included Miller's *Analytical and practical grammar, English grammar for junior classes* by Davies, and Collier's *History of English literature.*

Young people reading these books would have been constantly made aware of the sense of a religious moral, and, implicitly, a linguistic standard. Many of the stories they read in the early readers were Bible stories; even little stories about ordinary children were followed by moralistic aphorisms, such as "God gave this law to men, that they should love him more than all things in this world" and "You must not vaunt or boast of your skill."[11] English literature, if they got that far in their course of study, was supposed to be good for them; reading literature could curb the "inclination to read those trashy novels that are undoubtedly poisoning the intellect and moral life-blood of the readers."[12]

Therefore, whatever education these young people received linked the word and the good, and tied literacy to a moral and social standard. They learned "good English," the social dialect of the dominant class. Even educated young women, however, were removed from the linguistic standard by virtue of their sex and their age. These young women wrote when the social standard promulgated by etiquette and advice books stressed the importance of deference and politeness in women's speech. Male writers on feminine decorum often proscribed women's speech: one wrote that "a Female's conversation should be the index of her mind, pure, chaste and unaffected."[13] Women's language is conventionally seen as a deferential language that is, or ought to be, more polite than language used by men.[14]

Women themselves have long felt that self-assertion and self-expression were unfeminine, and in their writing would deflect attention from themselves and deprecate their own desires and abilities.[15] Denied access to the larger sphere of education and ideas, 19th century women diarists tended to develop a linguistic style that focused on the particulars of their daily lives. Their diaries consequently differ in subject matter from the private writings of men, many of whom wrote with a stronger sense of ego about their place in the physical or political world.[16] Women diligently wrote to the standard if they could, but often preferred conversation to exposition. In their private writings they indulged in long, unpunctuated sentences, contemporary slang, and other speech-like writing that shows little evidence of the written standard.

Young women writers, especially, show their distance from the polished

standard of written English; many wrote with anxiety over their worthiness at the task. The Bowlby sisters wrote for improvement and consequently were self-conscious about writing, and often reflect on the nature of writing. Perhaps their journals were marked or read by an instructor at Prospect Hill Seminary, for Louisa guiltily confesses, "Well I have written the rest of this book so badly. I am going to finish it much better if I do not get in too big a hurry" (15 Jan). Her sister Hattie is ever pessimistic about her abilities: "Well I have not written any thing worth mentioning for I don't know how long and I guess I never will either" (8 May).[17]

All three girls, as educated young ladies of their day, understood the purpose of their writing as an exercise in improvement. In the schoolroom, Louisa writes in her journal when the other girls write, explaining, "Bell is just writing a letter, Dora is writing in her journal" (9 Jan). Hellen draws attention to her need to catch up on her writing duty if she misses a day: "I did not have time to write last night so I will have to finish my yesterday's work today" (16 May). Louisa Bowlby liked to write, but was torn between obligations to write in her diary and to do her schoolwork: "I ought to be studying my French instead of writing here for it is getting late" (Holidays 1862) and torn also by the requirement to keep the Sabbath, "It is Sunday and I had not ought to be writing" (23 Feb 1863).

When Louisa does write she gives a sense of a girl's daily life without too many strenuous duties. She spends her day learning French, practicing her music, and painting birds while Ma does the washing. She loved music, and names in her diary several popular tunes of the day. She also loved a good time, and writes of parties where those present danced the "Caribou dance," and where "the boys all acted the negro first rate." At one party Uncle J. has too much of a good time, for Louisa reports that he "had a bowl of bread and milk with a stick in it" (15 Jan). This is, I assume, a slang phrase for drunkenness, for *milk* has often been associated with alcohol in slang terminology. She highlights with quotation marks, but no explanation, other slang words: "Ed was there with his new 'Jumper'" (20 Jan) and "Mrs. Alt was over to tea last night and the 'social' is to meet there next Friday night" (23 Feb). She does not explain what these words and phrases mean, for she is writing for herself, and she already knows.

Her sister Hellen begins writing with the same limited audience of one in mind. She admonishes at the beginning that her diary is "To be perused by the writer only," but relents just two lines later: "Annie and Hellen read this in partnership." Hellen often comments on the other girls writing away in the classroom, and finds herself writing at the same time. She finds some solace in this, as writing can be a cure for her lonesomeness: "I am not in the habit of writing in my journal Sunday but Annie was writing and I am a little lonesome so I thought I would write awhile" (8 June). Apparently, diary-writing was not enough to occupy a girl out of school, lonesome or not, for Hellen re-

sumes in November: "It has been a long time since I have written in my journal and everything of importance has passed by."

When Hellen does write it is often of social events that were terribly important to her, but that, removed from their context, seem trivial to a reader of today. Like many women diarists, she records few feelings or larger social or political events. She yearns for something to write about that will elevate her record into an exciting plot: "I hope something very important will happen before long because I want to make my journal interesting" (15 May). She tried once to write as she thought a writer should, in a long, distanced, and elaborate description of her holiday destination, putting the reader in the picture: "Just imagine yourself, a beautiful farm house surrounded with trees and shrubs growing in rich profusion around the neat little yard and then take a peep inside and there you will find Uncle and Aunty Brigman and three of the most splendid boys you ever met" (7 June). Despite her ambitious beginnings Hellen ends her diary most abruptly on 1 June 1868. Some pieces are cut out and missing, and we have no more to read of her long life.

Her little sister Hattie begins with innocence and good cheer, sociable at the start of her writing, since she intends to share her diary with her friend Emma. But neither of them can write according to their expectations: "Emma said she knew she couldn't write anything in her journal worth a kick, but I guess she will have more to write than I will for there isn't a single thing going on around here" (12 April). Some of what is going on is housework. Hattie writes of papering walls, putting down new carpet, and doing laundry, which now occupies Hellen's time: "Ma and Hellen washed today and the clothes dried so fast that Annie ironed the starched clothes today" (12 April). Unlike her sister Louisa, Hattie writes about doing housework herself. "We were so busy yesterday house cleaning that I couldn't write any" (15 April).

Usually, for Hattie, writing is a task of last resort. As obliged, she records the whos and whats of daily life, but strains against the requirement:

> Lottie is going to stay a week or so. I guess the girls will go up after her when she comes home because they want to go to Waterford any way. I think Ma and Annie will go to Brantford in a few days and see Mrs Shannon. I have nothing to write about and have nothing else to do so I want to write some more. I never read what I have written and I don't think I will until I get it written through or until my next birthday and then it will be something new. (30 April)

She becomes bored and petulant with writing. Her only delight is in sharing words with Em: "I will have to take my journal down to Caledonia with me for I am going to let Em see mine and she is going to let me see her journal" (5 May). Otherwise, she frets about writing, and spins out a long list of people and events when she does. Eventually even that exercise palls, and Hattie comments, "I have not written any for quite a while but I thought I would write a little tonight. Anything is good for a change" (31 Aug). Even Em gives up, long

before the year of writing is over: "The last time I heard from Em German she said I must not neglect my journal but I don't think she writes much in hers" (29 Nov). Hattie's last words mark her transition from literary into domestic duty: "I must stop writing now and get the table set" (11 April).

Mercy Ann Coles is less bound by duty in her writing; she records impressions of her travels with great delight and literary assurance. Her diary includes accounts of her trip to the Confederation Conference in Quebec in October, 1864, accompanying her parents. Her father, George Coles, was a prominent brewer, merchant, and politician. Mercy was one of twelve children, but according to her diary no other siblings went on this historic trip. She emulates published travel accounts of her day with their "statistics of hotel service, modes of transport and picturesque descriptions" (Buss "Dear Domestic" 4). She writes early in her journey: "We saw beautiful scenery coming through New Hampshire it was too dark to see the White Mountains. Mr. Tilly helped me admire it."[18] She is easily distracted from the scenery to sociability, for she continues on the subject of Mr. Tilly, noting that "he is the only beau of the party and with 5 single ladies he has something to do to keep them all in good humor."

Her writing has significance beyond that of recording an exciting trip to a city far from home. She seems aware that she is on the sidelines at historic moments, and has the wit to record the private sides of famous people: "D'Arcy McGee took me to dinner and sat between Lady McDonell and I. Before dinner was half over he got so drunk he was obliged to leave the table. I took no notice of him. Mr. Gray said I acted admirably." Mercy shows her sophistication when she writes with delightful irony: "John A. [MacDonald] was to have made a speech but he was tight or had a palpitation of the heart and could not go on." Her attention to politicians soon wanes, and Mercy prefers to write about fashion. About a ball where over eight hundred people were presented to the Governor General she writes: "Ma wore her grenadine over black silk. I wore my blue silk. There were only 2 or 3 trains there."

Mercy's vocabulary gives her writing its liveliness in her early diaries. She refers to details of fashionable dress, suggesting in this comment just how formal an occasion the conference was: "Ma is going to have a new black silk waist made. She has only the one evening dress & finds it rather awkward." Sometimes her diction retains a sense of distinctive vocabulary. In calling Mr. Tilly a *beau* she was using a term that was nearly obsolete in England by 1860; it lived on as an American slang word for lover or sweetheart.[19] She has no fear of calling John A. MacDonald *tight*, as well as an "old Humbug," and "The Conundrum," words that may have had a special colloquial connotation for her. Like other trip diaries she frequently refers to people and places she visited, but her youthful voice is often breathless and immediate in referring to them: "The Ball is to come off to night they say it is going to be such a crush."

Unfortunately, Mercy develops a sore throat while in Quebec, and misses

most of the arranged outings. She comes to hate Quebec, and thinks the weather is terrible because it rains all the time. Before her spirits are utterly dampened, she reports on the view from her hotel window: "Such dumpy, draggled women they have here. I have just seen one go by with a handsome embroidered skirt over a red one. The white one an inch thick with mud." Later she succumbs to irritation and despair, "I am sure I shall know the shape of every shingle in the roof of the old house opposite." After the Confederation Conference Mercy travelled to visit her relatives in the United States. Here she comments on the money and privilege that have given her room to write: "They [Aunt Elizabeth, Uncle William, and the cousins] are making cheese this morning. No servants, here they all do their own work. I am not surprised. Bertie found it so different at our house, when he had half a dozen to wait on him."

Her diaries are brief but unaffected; her tone is, in her early writings, enthusiastic, despite her dampened spirits. The delight in the act of writing marks her social class. She is sophisticated enough to give a sense of setting a scene for a reader, describing current fashion, and even picturing natural marvels for the reader. Her style is self-confident, her writing voice sparkles as she describes from a comfortable distance the world she visits on her trips, as on this visit to Barnum's Museum in New York: "Tom Thumb & his wife are in Europe but we saw two other dwarfs 2 Albano [sic] children with perfectly white hair, such lots of wonders it will take me a week to think of it all."

Sophia MacNab, daughter of Allan MacNab, a prominent businessman and politician, was also a wealthy, educated young woman. She kept a journal for seven months during 1846, a year in which she turned fourteen-years old, travelled to Montreal, and most significantly, lost her mother to a lingering disease. Sophia, like Mercy, writes about visits and dinners with the important men of the day and their families. But she also writes affectingly of the wasting away of "dearest Mamma" in her upstairs bedroom at Dundurn. Sophia kept her diary under a strict parental eye; she often records that she sat in Mamma's sickroom writing. She must have written early in each day about the previous day's events, for she often begins an entry for a day with "Wrote in my diary," going on to recount a day's visits and activities. Writing was for her a recording of the previous day, not making a breathless, immediate account of the current day. When she tires of beginning each entry with the same series of sentences, she revises the pattern, in a telling comment on the purpose for her writing: "As I am a good way past half through my book and I think it is useless to give such a long detail of each day so I am merely going to put that we went through the usual routine and anything particular that happens or anything that I want to remember."[20]

Sophia was tutored at home three hours a day: a Mr. Thomson taught her and her sister Minnie each morning. But Mamma, from her sickbed, wielded far greater power. Beginning at the back of her diary Sophia writes a list of

Mamma's rules for her and Minnie, as well as a list of faults which her mother thought she ought to correct. Among these are faults in both speech: "Mamma says that when we are speaking to a person we should never say will you be kind enough we should always say will you be so kind" and writing: "Mamma says that you should never write and that (&) way you should always write it in full." Mamma's rules covered all sorts of behavior, from not dancing the Polka ("or any of those fantastic dances") with gentlemen to not lounging about on the furniture. Sophia was limited even in where she could go within her own home: "Dearest Mamma does not wish us to go to the stable or yard except for eggs or to feed our hens," and "we are never to go to the Kitchen without leave."[21] Within her life of both privilege and privation Sophia seemed to take little joy in writing. When her "dear dear Mamma" finally dies, Sophia records not her genuine grief, but her guilt for neglecting her diary-writing: "I have not written my journal for a fortnight and I hope dear Papa will not be displeased with me but allow me to leave out a fortnight and just merely say that poor dear Mamma was buried on Tuesday May 18th at two o'clock" (23 May, 1846). When she finally fills up her book, she reflects: "Dear Mamma told me to keep one [diary] always, and if I keep it until I am twenty-one, I will have thirteen volumes. I only hope I may have the perseverance to continue." She may have continued, but the Public Archives contain only one volume, and a scrapbook of Sophia's later years as Lady Bury, including notices of Balls, where Sophia may indeed have danced fantastic dances with gentlemen.

Christina Bogart's mother influenced her to write, too, but in a more benign way. Christina's diary is in the very book that her mother used to keep a trip she took with her sea-captain husband when Christina was just a baby. She begins after reading "this sketch of Mamma's voyage" and is "determined, if possible, to continue a description of *our life*."[22] Christina's syntactic style, like Sophia's, is repetitive; she begins almost every entry quite formulaically with a phrase describing the weather. This correlates with an important social condition, however, since bad weather prevented people from visiting. These social visits were essential for both Christina and her writing. She bravely sets out to write of daily life, and focuses on that life with a fairly clear eye. As she writes, she abandons her comfortable repetitive syntactic patterns and begins to develop a narrative sense, writing anecdotes with humour and suspense.

This narrative skill is an oddity of diary writing which forces one to ask who the writer's intended audience was. Christina already knew the outcome of her own stories. By spinning out a tale or by recounting a joke, she is stringing along a hypothetical reader and indulging in narrative for its own sake:

> Nan came down after tea and we played a trick on Emmie – tied a little bell on the foot of her bed then led the string in our room along the floor and after things had been quiet for some time & Nan & I supposed to be asleep, we began winding up the thread, it got caught some way & we nearly exploded – Nan bundled out of bed to untangle it and

before we expected it began to ring – Emmie says 'for the *land* sake what's that' in such a funny voice that Annie laughed right out.

Her writing style suggests speech, but she mentions no one who may have shared her conversation. We are sometimes left wondering just what she means, since the point of her jokes and stories can be dependent on a particular context: "Sunday after Methodist meeting came as far down as Willetts with Mr Jas Reed then Susie Mills & Herb called me back & I played propriety the rest of the way – strange things happen some times" (Sunday 27 February).

Christina's colloquial vocabulary most strongly marks her text as conversational. She uses inexplicable in-jokes: "Monday 11th. Rainy 'John did not call' – good joke –", "Monday 28th Fine day (a la John White)," and "Nan was down and spent the evening – Emmie and I went up with her. She ate pudding all the way up and we brought the saucer back – People must have been struck, who met us for it was light as day." Some words and phrases are still current, "Nan was down a jiffy," and "I know if he were not so bashful he would have popped the question then and there;" others not, "Nan and I had a real *nigger* day." Some refer to practices now abandoned in Nova Scotia: on "the day poor Tebo [a convicted murderer] is to be hanged" a friend comes down "to see him strung up & came over to see us too." She uses vocabulary referring to the ladies' fashions and crafts popular in her day: she sews a *wrapper* for her mother, makes several *comfortables*, and works when she has time on her *Russian embroidery*.

Christina reports on doing lots of housework, and cleaning and cooking are a constant refrain in her writing. However, she is less a dutiful drudge than a fun-loving practical joker. The more she writes in her diary, the more relish she seems to take in recounting the escapades that prompted others to call her "wild." She drives a pig away with her umbrella, watches her friends sprinkle alum on people's necks at a tea party, and lies in bed to step tunes on the wall with her friend Nan. Her writing seems to be a refuge from the round of domestic duties. Occasionally Christina reproaches herself for not writing, but eventually fun overtakes guilt. Her final words are silly ones. She keeps the diary past her eighteenth birthday, closing her diary with copied bits of songs and verse: ""Oh! Tom tell them to stop!'/ Those were the words of Maria –" and "Jack was every inch a sailor/ Four and twenty years a whaler."

Lizzie McFadden, on her way to her new home, also makes stories of her life. She does not have the same polished sense of anecdote and incident as Christina Bogart does, however. Her diary is limited to an account of her trip; it begins with her family's departure from Winnipeg in a wagon, and ends with their arrival in Prince Albert. Lizzie must have seen herself as part of an important historical moment, the settlement of the West. Despite her limited education (apparent in her errors in spelling, such as *wimen* for *women*), Lizzie wanted to keep a record of a personally and historically important family trip.

She expects a later reader, for she glosses some words she thought may be unfamiliar: "we baked our pies in a reflecter or (Dutch oven)"[23] and labels the tops of her pages to correspond to landmarks on her journey. In keeping with the traditions of private diaries, though, she never tells the names and family relationships of those who accompanied her. This indicates that the diary may have been intended as a family keepsake, to be read by relatives who already knew who had made the trip.

Lizzie writes in a reporter-like fashion, communicating facts, not emotions. Each entry, often a long, paratactic, unpunctuated sentence, lists striking images and pertinent facts and shows the stylistic features of a traveller's account, with mention of the weather, the condition of the roads, the distance travelled, other travellers, and strange sights: "Started verry earley this morning came ofer twentyeight slows [sloughs] before dinner, after dinner we had splendred roads when we came in vew of Foart Ellace there was great hill to go up and had to cross the Asccinboyne [Assiniboine] over a bridge" (30 July 1879). She focuses on the physical necessities, reporting on external actions and events rather than on her frame of mind, even when she may have had reason to be afraid: "camped at eleven 'oclock and let the horses feed but we could not feed our selves as there was no wood to be got so we had a little more oat meal and water the children was crying for bread and we could not get any wood to Bake any with we have not seen any wood for this last three days" (9 July).

She tries not to complain, and sometimes pauses to describe the scenery in a conventional fashion appropriate for a young woman on an adventure in a strange new land: "we reached tutch wood hills plains and had dinner it is a verry hillie place and some prettie seaneries" (6 August). She writes matter-of-factly even about a violent summer storm: "Lightened and thundred & blood through the night" (13 July). Lizzie rarely puts herself as the subject of a sentence, concentrating instead on the communal efforts of all those travelling together: "Camped for noon on a strawburry bed and picked straw burries all the while we staid there got a good few started and had a verry hard time with the horse we had one in frunt of the other and thay would not work well and burries for tea and pancakes" (23 July). She represents the cooperative spirit of the successful group traveller, with her focus on the survival of the group and the success of their journey. Even when supplies are limited, people share: "there was a man came to get his tea he had some meat and cakes and all we could give him was a cup of tea" (8 July).

Underlying Lizzie's grammatically ragged account is the pattern of a fairy tale. The trip is fraught with physical dangers, which the travellers survive through perseverance and the kindness of strangers. Some of these strangers are fellow travellers with whom they share mutual generosity: "we have a partie of halfbreeds with us who are going out to P. Alberts, and have lots of company thay have a cow and we get lots of milk" (7 August), and "the cattle

eat all the Halfbreads flour up in the night and they had to borough from us" (9 August). Other times the strangers seem threatening, but offer no real physical harm: "In the morning we started away early in the morning as we passed the Indian tents thay all came out and laughed at us" (1 August). As though blessed by Providence, Lizzie's party passes through these potential dangers, which are minimized by Lizzie's optimistic fairy-tale diction (they travel through conventionally poetic "hills and dales" and "hills and hollows") that presages the happy ending.

The happy ending to Lizzie's fairy tale comes with the family's safe arrival in Prince Albert. Lizzie's last entry concludes: "went to Capt Youngs and there we had to stay as we could not get no further on account of the Smallpox we staid there all night and have been there ever since" (26 August). She ends her two-month trip with finality. She signs her name, on the last page, and writes "The End *End*."

Lizzie's comment that her family "have been there ever since" closes her narrative, just the way a teller would close an oral tale. This explanation, along with her frequent descriptions and occasional glosses, suggest that Lizzie expected someone to read her account later. Lizzie quite naturally wanted a record of an exciting transition in her life. She is exercising the "storage function" (Brown and Yule 13) of language, perhaps even considering writing as the storage of her youth. Others of the young women diarists appear to be motivated by the same drive; Hellen Bowlby wanted something exciting to happen now so that her diary would be good reading later. The other young women perhaps just wanted to store a small cache of their adolescence, of the brief time they were on the brink of womanhood.

The speech-like writing of many of the diaries suggests another function of this private writing. The diaries are often conversations of the writer with herself, and the writers use words and phrases that would have been proscribed in more formal writing.[24] The diaries, then, give us a glimpse of intimate, spoken language, rather than the public literary or journalistic styles previously examined in the history and development of Canadian English.[25] Reading her informal diaries we can hear Christina Bogart speak of having "choir practice" when singing loudly with her friends, or of being old enough at age 18 to "bang [? hang?] up to an apple tree." Like a participant in a friendly conversation, the reader of Hattie Bowlby's diaries (most likely her friend Emma) is expected to need no explanation of "Ma and I went out calling this afternoon. First I called at the Barretts then at the Riddles and Bryers...." The emotional content is important in these diaries: they exist and have been preserved as phatic documents, ones that maintain essential human relationships, such as are preserved and maintained in our daily, inconsequential conversations.

Not all the young writers enjoyed the conversation, and for them guilt, rather than cooperation, was the emotional stimulus to keep writing. For Sophia MacNab, and often for the Bowlby sisters, writing one's life was a rite

of passage. They strained against the duty, writing when required, and taking little pleasure in the process. Their misery in writing when they hadn't the desire shows in the formulaic patterns of their daily entries and in the emotional flatness of their accounts of events. Sophia's mother enjoined her "not to be sarcastic and unambiable," threatening that "if anything should happen to her & she should go to heaven and could see us [Sophia and her sister Minnie] committing any sins that it would grieve her so much to see her Children doing what we know would be displeasing to her." With such threats, it's no wonder that Sophia did not feel her words were her own. For her and other well-bred young women, writing was a duty, so they practiced a stilted version of the public discourse of their day, finding none of the solace and delight of the young women who wrote from their own exuberance.

These young women's diaries are all worth reading and understanding because their writers form the audience of readers for literary texts. Their writings imply readers' expectations of published works and can tell us about literary taste of the time. In the daily details they recount, they give us a sense of the texture of everyday lives, information of interest to both literary critics and social historians. But most importantly, they tell us how young women of another time used a vital communicative tool, the written word.

NOTES

1 Hellen Bowlby, Diary 1867-8. Public Archives of Ontario, hereafter PAO, MU 282.
2 Louisa Bowlby, Diary 1862. PAO MU 282.
3 Hattie Bowlby, Diary, 1874-5. PAO MU 282.
4 See Helen M. Buss, "Canadian women's autobiography: some critical directions" in *A mazing space*, eds. Shirley Neuman and Smaro Kamboureli (Edmonton: Longspoon/NeWest, 1986) and Helen M. Buss, "'The dear domestic circle': Frameworks for the literary study of women's personal narratives in archival collections" *Studies in Canadian literature* 14.1, (1989).
5 Gillian Brown and George Yule, *Discourse analysis*, Cambridge UP, 1983, 4-13
6 One reason that diaries are difficult to understand out of context is that they combine features of speech and writing. They are written texts that function as one-sided conversations that do not follow rules for conversational implicature. See Brown and Yule, 29ff., for a discussion of how much information is required for a conversation.
7 For an engaging discussion of speech styles see Martin Joos, *The five clocks* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961).
8 See G.W. Turner, *Stylistics* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973) for a general discussion of style in language.
9 Robert Stamp, *The schools of Ontario, 1876-1976*. Ontario historical studies series. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982) 7.
10 See R. D. Gidney, "Elementary education in Upper Canada: A reassessment" in *Education and social change: Themes from Ontario's past*, eds. Michael B. Katz and Paul H. Mattingly. (New York: NYU Press, 1975) 3-27. For a thorough documentary account of the development of public education and curricula see *Documentary history of education in Upper Canada, from 1791-1876* (Toronto) CIHM 49795-49822.
11 *First book of lessons* (Toronto, 1864) CIHM 41652, pp. 28-9.

12 Cited from the Annual Report on Education for 1885 in Stamp 10-11.
13 Cited in Barbara Berg, *The remembered gate: Origins of American feminism* (Oxford: OUP, 1978) 80.
14 For a recent discussion of gender and language, see Sally McConnell-Ginet, "Language and gender" in Frederick J. Newmeyer, ed., *Linguistics: The Cambridge survey Vol. IV, Language: The socio-cultural context*. Cambridge UP, 1988. The most readable and influential introduction to women's language is Robin Lakoff's *Language and women's place* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975).
15 See Patricia Meyer Spacks, "Female rhetorics" in *The private self*, ed. Shari Benstock (University of North Carolina Press, 1988).
16 Virginia Woolf noted this attention to particularity in her "Introductory letter" to *Life as we have known it* ed. Margaret Llewelyn Davis (New York: Norton rpt, 1975). See also the discussion of stylistic differences between men's and women's diaries in Elizabeth Hampsten, *Read this only to yourself: The private writings of midwestern women 1880-1910* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1982). For a discussion of the projection of one's ego in private writing see Robert A. Fothergill, *Private chronicles: A study of English diaries* (London: Oxford UP, 1974), 87.
17 Note that even when they are fretting about writing they preface their remarks with the conversational opener *Well*.
18 Mercy Ann Coles, Diary 1864, 1878, 1879. Public Archives of Canada, hereafter PAC, MG 24 B66.
19 John Russell Bartlett, *Dictionary of Americanisms* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1860).
20 Sophia MacNab, Diary 1846. PAC micro reel A-305 (25 March 1846).
21 The latter is really a stricter revision of an earlier rule: "Dearest Mamma says we must never go to the kitchen but she allows us to go for meat for our little dogs when the servants have not time."
22 Christina Bogart, Diary 1880-2. PAC MG 55/29.
23 Lizzie McFadden Diary 1879. PAC MG 29 C25. The Saskatchewan Archives has a typed (and altered) version of Lizzie's diary, listed under the name of Mrs. Coombs.
24 Elizabeth Hampsten also concludes that women's diaries are written in conversational style. She explains: "Women in their letters and diaries wrote as if public literature did not exist, or, if education and social aspiration drew this public style to their attention, their attempts at imitating it were erratic" (94).
25 See M. H. Scargill, *A short history of Canadian English* (Victoria, British Columbia: Sono Nis Press, 1977). The lexicographic study of Canadian English was pioneered by Walter Avis, whose work led to the compilation of *A dictionary of Canadianisms* (1967).

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Review articles & reviews / Critiques et comptes rendus

A CHALLENGE TO READERS AND TO RACISTS

The house of the good spirits. Donn Kushner. Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1990. 214 pp., $18.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88619-288-9.

Early in Donn Kushner's book, *The house of the good spirits*, the eleven year-old protagonist wonders "Why does everybody want to teach me things?" His mother consoles him, "It's because you're such a good listener," and adds "But you have to learn some things by yourself." These words describe the book's structure (Amos both listens, and finds out for himself), but the question – really a complaint – is also a possible criticism of any book that deals explicitly with issues of broad moral and social significance. In this new book Kushner takes up the theme of human rights previously explored in *A book dragon* (winner of the I.O.D.E. Book Award – National Chapter), this time focussing directly upon racial prejudice. And fortunately, he handles the issue with enough subtlety and complexity to allay most complaints.

The risk of preaching on such a theme is great; indeed, hardly avoidable, one might think. But Kushner does avoid heavy-handed didacticism without sacrificing moral content, first of all by the creation of an admirable and likeable protagonist. Amos Okoro, an eleven-year-old Nigerian boy, comes with his great aunt Naomi to spend a year in a small town near Kingston, Ontario while his parents, medical doctors, study at the nearby hospital. As Amos attends the local school and meets the townspeople, he encounters a variety of racist attitudes, from the well-meant slurs of Mr. Bidcup ("It's like a little jungle....You'll be right at home here," he comments genially on the neglected garden of Amos's new home), to the deliberate hostility of some of his new schoolmates. The range, variety and penetrating analysis of racist attitudes Kushner gives us is impressive. Children and adults display the whole gamut, from the unthinking to the brutally intentional: a boy who at first sees in Amos

the stereotypical black athlete concludes "Well, I guess *some* of you aren't such good ball players;" a teacher deliberately provides the other children with a theme for harrassment when he calls Amos's parents "witch doctors;" a child remarks, perhaps innocently, that he knows why Amos is not afraid of ghosts: "Because he's used to spooks already. That's what my dad calls blacks: spooks. He says in some streets in Toronto you can't see anything else."

Kushner's choice of the black child's point of view for his story risks the alienation of the white reader, but this does not happen. Children, whether racially stigmatized or not, are often the victims of prejudice, teasing and threats; Amos, who is intelligent and clever, fearful and courageous by turns, is an empathetic guide through these experiences. His understanding, and ours, is furthered by the reflections of Aunt Naomi whose cultural sophistication, disguised beneath her native dress, makes her the obvious superior of Amos's tormentors. We sympathize with Amos also because the ignorance of some (by no means all) of the "whites" in the story is made to look ludicrously funny, or just plain pitiable. Naomi "teaches" unobtrusively and entertainingly by means of African legends, and her wisdom merges with that of the clever tortoise who becomes Amos's emblem and guide into his fantasy adventure.

The first half of the book moves slowly and somewhat confusingly: there is not much action, and we are introduced to numerous characters who are hard to remember. But after Amos enters a fantasy world through the door of a reputedly haunted house, the book becomes a compelling read. Kushner is a master of surrealistic invention. Here he draws together themes of black slavery and its history in the United States, the adventures of slaves escaping to Canada, and finally the terrors of the Nigerian civil wars of this century, to which Amos has his own family connections. Far from escapism, this fantasy is a sometimes terrifying transformation of the real world in such a way as to illuminate its true significance: a television set is morally empowered to show a series on black slavery; Lake Ontario becomes the setting for an odyssey through the islands of temptation; the local inhabitants of Port Jordan introduced earlier in the book are reincarnated as types of good and evil, leading us to an understanding of the history of slavery.

The thread that holds all these together is Kushner's awareness that fear is the central cause of racism, and that racism exists everywhere, including among competing black peoples. Amos's courage in the schoolyard is given its true significance when he performs an act of great bravery in the fantasy world. But Kushner does not fob us off with soft psychological explanations either: in his two schoolyard bullies, reincarnated as adults in various stages of the fantasy odyssey, he presents the profound wickedness that underlies racial discrimination.

No one could criticize Donn Kushner's writing for patronizing young read-

ers; more than most, his books demand thoughtful and informed reading. But the rewards are rich for those willing to pursue them.

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Plaisirs d'animaux. Roger Paré. Illus. auteur. Montréal, La courte échelle. 1990. Non paginé, broché. ISBN 2-89021-140-1; **Plaisirs d'hiver**. Roger Paré. Illus. auteur. Montréal, La courte échelle, 1990. Non paginé, broché. ISBN 2-89021-141-X.

Inutile de décrire longuement la série "Plaisirs de...", déjà bien connue, dont tous les volumes destinés à un très jeune public offrent, pour chaque double page, une comptine à gauche et une illustration pleine page à droite.

La comptine est un genre difficile qui demande de l'humour, de la vivacité, de l'insolite, du rythme, des jeux phonétiques, pour ne citer que les principales caractéristiques du genre. Dans les deux derniers volumes de "Plaisirs", toutes ces qualités, à l'exception des jeux phonétiques, évidemment, se retrouvent dans les images, mais trop peu dans les textes. Les efforts pour insuffler au texte rythme et vivacité sont parfois anéantis par un certain prosaïsme du texte, qui explique, à juste titre pourtant, l'image de la page de droite. Car sans les comptines explicatives, comment faire comprendre au jeune lecteur que Souris-Lili dans la gueule de l'hippopotame ne court aucun danger, que la bataille de boules de neige n'est qu'un jeu sans intention belliqueuse et que le rhinocéros n'a pas pour dessein d'écraser les tortues? Les comptines apparais-

sent donc, en quelque sorte, comme un "mal" nécessaire: elles n'enthousiasment pas, mais elles éclairent les illustrations, qui constituent indubitablement le centre d'intérêt.

Les illustrations de Roger Paré apparaissent comme différentes des images qui ornent habituellement les livres de la petite enfance. On cherchera en vain ici des aplats de couleurs vives, cernés de contours bien visibles, qui font des images certes très claires, mais parfois un peu ennuyeuses. L'univers de Roger Paré est un univers coloré, mais sans aucune violence: les teintes sont atténuées, les contours adoucis, les formes rondes abondantes, bref, tout est là, graphiquement parlant, pour rassurer visuellement le jeune public auquel les livres s'adressent.

Ce qui rehausse le charme et l'originalité de ces albums, c'est la vie que l'illustrateur insuffle à ses images. Cette vie se manifeste par l'abondance des personnages-animaux représentés dans des situations souvent humoristiques, caractéristique digne d'être soulignée, étant donné sa relative rareté. L'illustrateur excelle à donner des expressions humaines aux aminaux, nous les rendant ainsi plus proches et plus convaincants. On ne manquera pas de remarquer l'air d'extrême concentration des deux pêcheurs sous la glace, ou l'expression un peu offensée de la petite marmotte qui pagaie par "un beau matin chaud", air sévère et offusqué de quelqu'un surpris par un trouble-fête dans une activité qui ne souffre pas de témoin. On s'amusera aussi de l'allure des quatre chats intrépides qui dévalent la pente enneigée à la queue leu-leu, airs crispés s'il en est, mais combien merveilleusement observés. On pourrait repérer ainsi de page en page une foule de détails humoristiques, car voilà bien un des points forts de ces albums.

Enfin, par son côté à la fois rassurant et épanouissant pour les tout-petits, le type de société représentée me semble bien convenir au public visé. Comme il s'agit de "Plaisirs", l'atmosphère des albums est évidemment détendue, et seules des activités ludiques sont évoquées. Les animaux font preuve d'un remarquable esprit de solidarité, chacun autorisant les autres à utiliser ses caractéristiques physiques pour s'amuser, se déplacer, se cramponner, etc. Malgré la promiscuité qui règne dans la plupart des images et l'importance qu'y tient la vie collective, chaque animal semble avoir choisi ses activités et s'y adonner en toute liberté. Pas d'embrigadement, ni d'autorité. L'union fait la force en cas de besoin, mais rien ici ne semble imposé. Voilà de quoi séduire et faire rêver les jeunes lecteurs parfois un peu rétifs devant l'autorité parentale. Ils trouveront en Roger Paré quelqu'un qui les comprend et qui sait leur parler.

Françoise Lepage *a enseigné la littérature pour la jeunesse pendant plusieurs années et a publié de nombreux articles sur la littérature québécoise et sur l'illustration.*

A FEMINIST ANNE

A life and its mirrors: A feminist reading of L.M. Montgomery's fiction. Gabriella Åhmansson. Sweden: Uppsala, 1991. 183 pp., paper. ISBN 91-554-2673-5.

What a relief and delight it is at last to have a good, full-length feminist study of Montgomery's work. In the last ten years Montgomery scholarship has changed dramatically, largely due to wide-spread acceptance of feminist analysis and the insistence on taking seriously women's voices and women's ways of being. And now, with the publication of Gabriella Åhmansson's doctoral thesis (this is volume one of a projected two), we have a solid, scholarly, readable, feminist analysis of *Anne of green gables* and *Anne's house of dreams* in relationship to Montgomery's life.

Using Montgomery's life as a grounding, Åhmansson examines the gender expectations, concepts of romance, and attitudes to education, sexuality, and marriage that shape and influence Anne Shirley. Montgomery's fascination with romance is thoughtfully discussed in a section called "Lady Anne Cordelia Elaine Shirley and the elusive world of romance." It is a pleasure to see the friendship of Leslie Moore and Anne Shirley Blythe get close attention – there is much in that intimacy and intertwining that has begged for careful feminist reading.

Åhmansson's work shows all the strengths and some of the regrettable but perhaps inevitable weaknesses of a strong doctoral thesis that has been published as is. Åhmansson has done her academic work admirably, making good use of recent criticism as well as of Montgomery's journals and letters; the footnotes are full and informative. She has read carefully in feminist criticism and the works cited will suggest a detailed and colourful map to those who have also made and followed charts in new feminist lands. Her reading of Montgomery's texts is full of insight. Unfortunately, in a doctoral thesis, much has to be explained and reviewed in the first chapters in a detail that the non-academic may find wearisome. Non-scholars may not want an article-by-article review of the critical literature on Montgomery or Anne, and scholars of Montgomery will know most of this terrain already. Nevertheless, when Åhmansson does get into the discussion of *Anne of green gables* and *Anne's house of dreams*, the pace quickens and readers interested in decoding Montgomery's multiple and conflicting subtexts will find rich material here.

There are sure to be many other studies of Montgomery in the next few years and scholars and general readers alike can be grateful to Åhmansson for doing some of the less glamorous spade work in the early sections of this book. Since she has done such fine work in volume one, it will be intriguing to see

how Åhmansson probes the Emily books, *The blue castle*, and *Rilla of Ingleside* in the proposed volume two.

Elizabeth R. Epperly, *Acting Head of English at Memorial University of Newfoundland, is a co-editor of Montgomery's letters. Her study* L.M. Montgomery's heroines and the pursuit of romance *is to be published by the University of Toronto Press in 1992.*

THE QUINTESSENTIAL SHAPESHIFTER

P.L. Travers. Patricia Demers. Twayne, 1991. 160 pp., $21.95 U.S. cloth. ISBN 0-8057-7005-4.

This book makes me want to reread P.L. Travers's Mary Poppins stories. That alone makes it a useful book. Moreover, it gives a particular light with which to undertake that rereading, and thus it is a valuable book. I am very grateful to Patricia Demers.

That said, let us commiserate with her for the limitations within which she has had to work. First, the "protective privacy, which often appears to be prickliness, of P.L. Travers herself" (113) and her "aversion to analysis" (2) set severe limits upon the biographical element of the book. The twelve pages of chapter one, "A Writer's Life," is all we get, though it is enough to establish the "sense of continuity and integration" (2) Demers claims for her. The childhood details and memories we are shown only make us want more, to help us connect and recognize some of the reverberant details of the books – such as the child's making of miniature city-parks. Travers insists that, like any writer of a "successful children's book" (115), she does not write for children, nor for "some image of her distant child-self" but as the adult who "still *is* that child" (111). Her assertion of the interconnectedness of child and adult experience both lived and written means that, with however ignoble a curiosity, we long for more about what Demers refers to tantalizingly as "the continuous cycle of return and restoration in Travers' own life" (112).

The second source of frustration we have to guess at: the limitations which Demers' editors seem to have imposed make for frustrating reading, as they probably made for frustrating writing and revising. There simply is insufficient room to deal any more than adequately with some of the issues she raises. For instance, Demers manages to address the charge of racism by emphasising the 1981 revision of the "Bad Tuesday" chapter in *Mary Poppins*, and glancing at the larger context. She reiterates the need to be "sensible," neither tolerating "unacceptable, however unwittingly embedded, racist bias" nor sanitizing robust literature, but calling for "genuinely liberating" and "empowering" reading (96).

Sometimes the constraints are ironically liberating. The "conundrum" of Mary Poppins herself is the subject of a whole chapter, and on first reading it seems as if Demers has been able to do little more than catalogue the various ways readers, critics, and film-makers have seen this "quintessential shape-shifter" (68). Certainly some critics, such as Michele Landsberg (not included in Demers' catalogue), have no kind words for Mary Poppins, but we look in vain for any rebuttal of such characterizations. Landsberg's is particularly harsh, though her sometimes inaccurate details cast doubt upon the validity of her generalizations; to her, Mary Poppins is "beady-eyed, peremptory, hard-hearted, extraordinarily vindictive, megalomaniac, prim, conceited and greedy, a veritable Nero at the circus" (*Michele Landsberg's guide to children's books* Penguin, 1986. 125-126). Demers' own views tiptoe through "seems," "might," and "it is curious," turn aside into a series of rhetorical questions, and limp off with the statement that "the very fact that such questions can be asked underscores both Mary Poppins' complexity and Travers' art in sustaining the attraction and unpredictability of her heroine" (78). She concludes (with a sting, it is true, in the apparent tolerance) that "It is beneficial to allow all these possibilities to coexist, since each reader discerns in this nanny one salient characteristic which itself reflects on the idiosyncracies [*sic* – one of a number of irritating typographical errors] of the reader" (83).

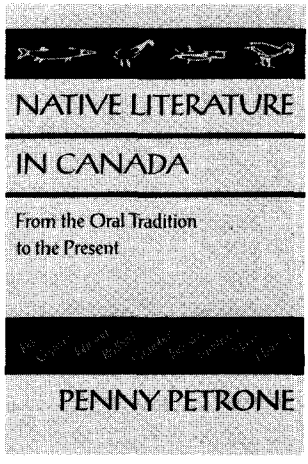
In insisting on the conundrum of Mary Poppins, and calling her "extraordinary" (68), "exceptional" (69), "singular" (73), "unique" (74), "unparalleled" (74), and "inexplicable" (82), Demers resists the temptation to impose her own "reflected idiosyncrasies" on Travers or on us. "True criticism," Travers declared sixty years ago, "is surely a process of inclusion, not of separation, of preoccupation with the thing for the thing's own sake and not a pronouncement of the critic's preconceived ideas about that thing" (25). Demers calls this an Arnoldian view, as anyone would who read Travers' call to "see it whole" (25), but it is worth noting that, unlike Arnold, Travers does not require the true critic or the creative artist (she maintains they are synonymous) to see either life or art *steadily* as well as whole. This omission from the Arnoldian phrase, deliberate or not, is significant, for "steadiness" is not a characteristic of the shapeshifting nanny or of the worlds she links. Wholeness, for Travers, is in movement – in the Grand Chain dance at the full moon, or in Mary Poppins' own comings and goings, whether with the wind, through chalk pictures, or swinging and spinning with the compass needle. In their concern with harmony and connectedness across time and space, the Mary Poppins stories are of a piece with Travers' other works in her writing lifetime – and this Demers shows us convincingly.

Like the nanny who never explains and is never explained, like Travers herself who admits that "Anything I write is all question" (80), Demers has written a book which sends its readers back to those other books, to confront the questions and seek the connections for themselves.

Susan Drain *is Visiting Professor at the University of Toronto, where she teaches children's literature and pursues research in Victorian writing for children.*

A NATIVE CONTEXT

Native literature in Canada: From the oral tradition to the present. Penny Petrone. Oxford University Press, 1990. 213 pp., $16.95 paper. ISBN 0-19-540796-2.



A foundation for the study of Canadian native literature, a growing canon of work virtually unexplored, has been laid. As Penny Petrone says in her preface, "[t]his book traces the long development of Indian and Metis literature in Canada and attempts to interpret the aesthetic dimensions of native sensibilities." Her undertaking is formidable and eminently necessary.

Examining the history of work by Canadian natives writing in the English language, the book explores and assesses (in chronological fashion) the influence of oral literature upon modern literary forms. It also attempts to provide reasons why western literary criteria are not always applicable to the study of native literature. The text would be very useful for providing a historical context in which to survey Canadian native literature.

Petrone is a Professor Emeritus at Lakehead University. Her other books include *First people, first voices* in which she edits selected native writing and speeches from the 1600s to the present and *Northern voices: Inuit writing in English*. Her new book sets a precedent as the first formal book-length study of writing by Canadian natives. In numerous examples of poems and speeches, native writers speak for themselves. The various speeches are themselves worthy of another full study.

Native literature in Canada is divided into six chapters, each covering some of the most prominent and influential social experiences of natives living in Canada. Each chapter also covers a relatively large period of time, giving a broad perspective on the manifold qualities of native writing.

Chapter one, the period of post-colonial contact, explores the fascinating realm of oral literature, central to understanding much of native literature. While focusing on narratives, song and oratory, Petrone discusses the native respect for the spoken word, suggesting that native leaders were chosen for

their elocution, as evidenced in any one of the orations discussed in the book; leaders were often selected according to their ability to arouse "emotion by means of telling metaphorical comparisons."

Chapters two to six are divided according to cultural events such as the arrival of missionaries between 1820 and 1850. The result of this proselytizing was a break from the oral tradition and the beginning of Canadian natives writing in English. George Copway was the first Canadian native to publish a book in English. As noted by Petrone, George Copway's book was reprinted six times, and lauded by such notable friends as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and James Fenimore Cooper.

With the ability to use the English language also came the beginning of written dissent, particularly with the Canadian Indian policy that practices elimination through assimilation. Moreover, as Petrone acknowledges, the "literature of Canada's native peoples has always been quintessentially political, addressing their persecutions and betrayals and summoning their resources for resistance." Chapter three –1850 to 1914 – explores the coercive policy of the Canadian Indian acts. With the exception of Pauline Johnson, few natives attained wide literary exposure, even though there were many books written and many eminent native leaders expressing their points of view; "Victorian society in Canada was not ready to listen to its native peoples."

The explosion of creative writing begins during the 1970s. Chapter five discusses the turning point in the development of literature by natives. Giving a brief analysis of works by prominent native writers, Petrone attempts to illustrate the vast range of creative writing. Chapter six continues this discussion but focuses more on the specific texts of writers such as Beatrice Culleton, Jeanette Armstrong, Tompson Highway and Thomas King.

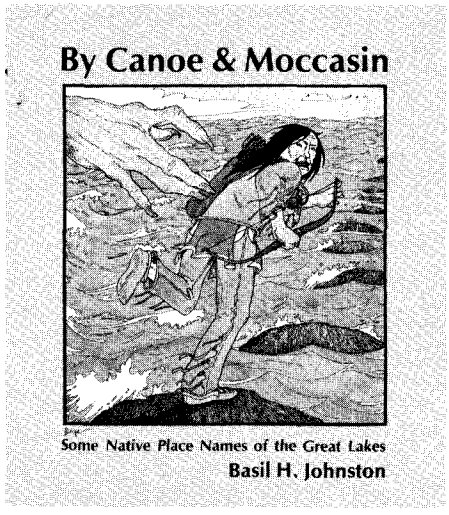
With the growing awareness and popularity of Canadian native writers comes an urgent need to provide a context in which to understand their work – not only to expose the nuances of native writing, its antecedents and history, but to recognize that it has made and is making, a significant contribution to Canadian literature. "European classifications are inadequate," Petrone suggests. As a non-native, I find *Native literature in Canada* provides a useful historical context, and "for Indian writers that context is both ritualistic and historical, contemporary and ancient."

Paul Lumsden *is a graduate student at the University of Alberta.*

FROM THE NATIVE HERITAGE

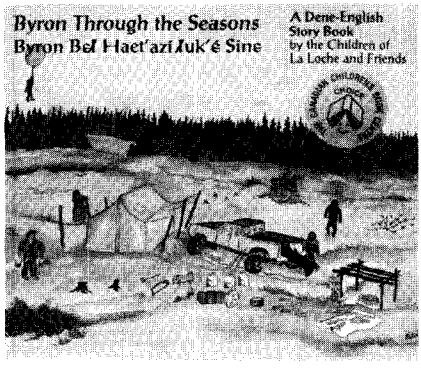
By canoe and moccasin: Some native place names of the Great Lakes. Basil H. Johnston. Illus. David Bayer. Waapone Publishing, 1988. 45 pp., $9.95 paper. ISBN 0-9692185-1-6; **Byron through the seasons: A Dene-English**

story book. The children of La Loche and friends. Fifth House, 1990. Unpag., $14.95 cloth. ISBN 0-920079-60-1; **Giving: Ojibwa stories and legends**. The children of Curve Lake. Ed., Georgia Elston. Waapone, 1985. 56 pp., $7.95 paper. ISBN 0-9692185-0-8.



Basil Johnston's not inconsiderable skills as a storyteller are tested and pass with flying colours in this didactic little collection of Ojibway legends about Nanabush and his old grandmother N'okimiss. The stories reveal the original names of various places around the Great Lakes, and although at first the integration of the native names and their meanings into the texts seems a little laborious, Johnston's control of the pace manages to save the sense of the picaresque that is inherent in the legends. Nine short stories, which include "Nanabush nearly drowns," "Nanabush flies with the geese," and "Nanabush challenges a Weendigo," explain how Lake Winnipeg came to be murky, how the islands of Georgian Bay were formed, and how the Giant Beaver flooded Wisconsin.

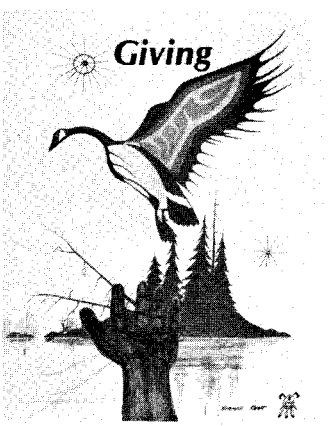
Regrettably, the illustrations in this book are uninspired and the map at the front is clearly inadequate, but an Ontario highway map is all that is needed to bring the stories alive. As always, Johnston aims at scholars of all ages, and the inclusion of a one-page pronunciation key can keep anyone busy for an entire afternoon. The additional editor's note and photograph of a skeleton of a prehistoric giant beaver is a delightful bonus that anchors the stories in actual fact, while providing food for the imagination. A child who has seen the teeth on this monster will never lose sleep over mere bogey-men again.



Byron through the seasons, the second in the delightful Byron picture book series, was produced by a group of Dene children with help from their teachers and elders. The English text is simple and appropriate, a brief delineation of the hunting and gathering process as it is still practiced in northern communities, and the Dene text looks intriguingly exotic. However, the real strength is in the illustrations. How the editors managed to make the

work of eight different children so complementary is a mystery, but the result is a series of bright, naïve scenes of everyday life in the settlement and bush. The trucks, skidoos, chain saws, and ATVs are drawn with loving precision, and the log cabins, canvas tents and pre-fab houses fairly shout "home" at you from every page.

Each page depicts a complex scene of activity – people carrying water, scraping moose hides, cutting ice – and floating through the top of each picture is a small, enigmatic, faceless figure, hanging from a bright red balloon. Even without having read the previous book in the series, we know this is Byron, dreaming himself out of the school library to the sound of his grandfather's voice. The supplementary information on Dene life found at the back of the book may attract older children and teachers, but it is the photographs of the children who did the artwork that is likely to mesmerize younger readers.



OJIBWA STORIES AND LEGENDS
FROM THE CHILDREN OF CURVE LAKE

Giving: Ojibwa stories and legends is a much less ambitious book than *Byron through the seasons*, and a less successful one, but it still has something to offer. The stories are short, and lively, with very few false notes, and the children's illustrations are attractively simple, but the editor has been overambitious in her contribution. We get an introduction that is occasionally interesting but poorly organized, acknowledgements that run to two full pages and include such marginal figures as her son, who though "deep in his law studies, gave me heartening encouragements and sage suggestions," and an insert on the history of the Abnishinabe of Curve Lake which includes some confusing statements. The photographs are cramped and muddy, and the map inside the back cover is inadequate, but the real pity is that the children and their stories get rather lost in the flurry of information about the editor.

Robin McGrath *is working in Coppermine, N.W.T. while on leave from the University of Alberta.*

FROM THE PEDLAR'S BASKET

The singing basket. Retold by Kit Pearson. Illus. Ann Blades. Groundwood, 1990. 32 pp., $13.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88899-104-5; **Mei Ming and the dragon's daughter**. Retold by Lydia Bailey. Illus. Martin Springett. Scholastic, 1990. 32 pp., $14.95 cloth. ISBN 0-590-73370-2.

The pedlars who went about the villages in past centuries often carried among their more perishable wares some cheaply-printed folk tales and ballad sheets, thus circulating and preserving many traditional tales, poems and legends. The two tales under review here, while certainly not cheaply-printed, have the best qualities of folk tradition – strong, simple plots, some vivid details, and a satisfying resolution. One is a Quebecois version of a European folk tale, while the other comes from China.

The story of *The singing basket* has been told in many versions; Kit Pearson's picture book is a delightful adaptation of it for younger readers. The text is spare and straightforward, with an emphasis on dialogue and action, and Ann Blades' water colours are evocative of a chilly Quebec winter. The story is a *fabliau* about a crisis in a marriage, provoked and resolved by trickery. Finette pretends to have a terrible toothache, which can only be cured by fine French wine, so her husband Jacques undertakes the two day journey to town to fetch the wine; en route he meets a pedlar who persuades Jacques to climb into his large wicker basket and be carried back, unseen, to his home. When Finette lets in the pedlar, with his basket, there sits the greedy local seigneur, enjoying Finette's home cooking (roast partridge, smoked eels, jellied pigs' feet and turnips) and singing in a raspy voice:

> Jacques has gone to fetch us some wine,
> What a foolish fellow!
> *Finette's roast partridge is sublime,*
> Oh, my, I'm feeling mellow!

The basket suddenly breaks into song – an indignant one – and opens to reveal Jacques, who drives the seigneur away. Kit Pearson provides a positive resolution to the tale: "Jacques and Finette had a long talk. From then on they took better care of each other and lived the rest of their days in peace and contentment."

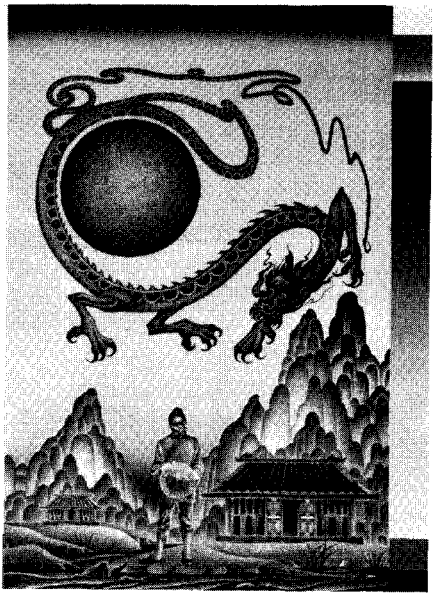
The visits of the seigneur, which an older reader might ascribe to other motives, are accounted for here by his gourmandise, and Pearson adds a few comical touches of the seigneur, burping and banging his mug; Ann Blades' pictures, too, which originally illustrated another retelling of this story, emphasize the joking quality rather than the intense emotions which might be evoked by the situation (the stuff of many a literary and real-life tragedy). While many folk tales have elements of magic or romance to attract children,

this one is altogether earthy, expressing the Gallic countryman's delight in ingenuity and one-upmanship. The songs, which I find fit nicely to the tune of "Pop goes the weasel," give the story a particular colour and humour, while gentle indications of real affection between the woodcutter and his wife mitigate the potential harshness and convince us of the "peace and contentment" promised at the end.

Song is again the means of revealing character and motives and of resolving a problem in Lydia Bailey's *Mei Ming and the dragon's daughter*. Unlike the earthy humour of *The singing basket*, however, the tone of this story is serious; it concerns the magical powers of the human voice to calm monsters and provide for human needs. Mei Ming is modest about her singing:

> Fish have fins and birds have wings.
> I've one small voice
> But I can sing.

When her village is parched by drought, and she finds a hidden lake which could relieve the villagers, this "small voice" proves to have a powerful magic. By singing she attracts the dragon's daughter, who joins her in singing to sleep the old dragon and thus liberating the waters he guards. The dragon's daughter returns with Mei Ming to live in the river that now flows through the village, and "each evening at sunset the people of the village could hear them sing their songs together, their voices joined as one in joy and friendship." The gift of song in this story is like the gift of water: a deep human need which is to be shared with other people, and an unfailing source of pleasure.



Mei Ming and the dragon's daughter is a satisfying story about courage and generosity, and it has been quite well told. What is likely to strike the reader most vividly, however, are the brilliantly-coloured illustrations by Martin Springett. He uses rich reds and deep blue-greens to suggest a traditional Chinese setting and the scroll-like designs and steep-sided, round-topped mountain forms often found in Chinese art. While evoking tradition, however, the effect of the art is original; portraits of the characters are stylized but emotionally expressive, and the forces and moods of nature are vividly conveyed – for example, by the harsh talons of the sun dragon during the drought. The design of the book and arrangement of the illustra-

tions are particularly attractive; Springett uses roundels, decorative borders, double-page pictures with inset text, and varying perspectives to fascinate the reader and draw us deeper into the world of the old story.

Gwyneth Evans *has taught English at several Canadian universities, and now teaches Nineteenth-Century Fiction and Children's Literature at Malaspina College on Vancouver Island.*

MERE ILLUSTRATION: A NEW *RUMPELSTILTSKIN*

Rumpelstiltskin. Dorothy Joan Harris. Illus. Regolo Ricci. Oxford University Press, 1991. 33 pp., $16.95. ISBN 0-19-540766-0.

Rumpelstiltskin made one of its early appearances in Rabelais' *Gargantua* (1575). Since then, numerous versions of the tale have appeared throughout the world, with the creature answering to such names as Tom-Tit-Tot, Whippity-Stourie, Trillevip, and Kinkach Martinko. The best known account occurs in the Grimm Brothers' fairy tales, and Harris models her version on theirs. Despite Bruno Bettelheim's belief that fairy tales should appear unillustrated, Regolo Ricci makes an admirable attempt to render in pictures the highlights of Harris's story.

While Harris is a well-established writer of picture books, adolescent novels, and magazine articles, *Rumpelstiltskin* is her first attempt at making an old tale seem new. Harris modifies the story by replacing the old, avaricious king with a wise, young modest one. In addition, Harris names her heroine Elinore (the Greek word for light), thus giving her more identity than a typical fairy tale character. Furthermore, Harris's tale is didactic: the Miller's discovery of Rumpelstiltskin's true name and his subsequent redemption from avarice add a certain freshness to the traditional story. The only weakness of the text appears at the end: extending the story past the last scene (between the Queen and the little man) appears superfluous.

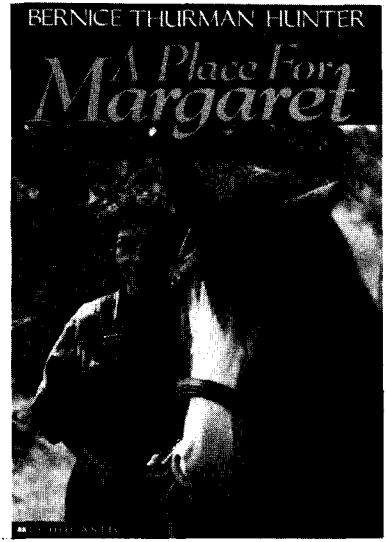
Rumpelstiltskin is Regolo Ricci's fourth picture book and second fairy tale (see *The tinderbox* 1990). One must admire his courage in following a tradition established by such renowned illustrators as George Cruikshank, Walter Crane, Mervyn Peake, Paul Galdone and Paul Zelinsky. Moreover, Ricci's con-

ception of Rumpelstiltskin is a complete success: the little man appears as a traditional dwarf, with heavy eyebrows, red pudgy cheeks, a red pointed nose, and a look of devilish merriment on his crafty face. The best illustration shows Rumpelstiltskin dancing round the blazing fire in the wintry woods brandishing a look of triumphant glee, while the Miller peers at him from a distance. However, though old men's faces are Ricci's greatest strength, his women's and children's faces have little character. In places, Elinore looks sullen, rather than sad, smug rather than triumphant, and, at times, almost masculine; the baby appears out of proportion and has no character whatsoever.

Ricci's illustrations, with their generous rich colours, ultimately simply illustrate rather than elaborate upon the text – with one curious exception. Near the end, we see the Miller holding his grandson, while the faint image of a winged creature perches on his shoulder; to his left we see parts of a wing, a hand, and the corner of a gown disappearing. Nothing in the text explains this image. We must decide for ourselves whether these ghostly creatures represent the Miller's good or bad angels. Although the rest of the illustrations do not quite provide the "originality of vision" Sendak stresses as the most important quality of a true picture book artist, this one instance of the inexplicable shows promise.

Anne Hiebert Alton *is completing her doctorate in Victorian literature at the University of Toronto. She has taught courses in Children's Literature, and also published on Dickens.*

A place for Margaret. Bernice Thurman Hunter. Scholastic, 1984. 151 pp., $4.50 paper. ISBN 0-590-73665-5; **Margaret in the middle**. Bernice Thurman Hunter. Scholastic, 1986. 149 pp., $4.50 paper. ISBN 0-590-73666-3; **Margaret on her way**. Bernice Thurman Hunter. Scholastic, 1988. 140 pp., $4.50 paper. ISBN 0-590-73667-1.



The author of the delightful Booky stories returns to Depression-era Ontario to bring us five years in the life of another lively young heroine in the Margaret Trilogy. After positive TB test, eleven-year-old Margaret Emerson is sent for a restorative summer to the Shelburne area farm of her childless aunt and uncle. Circumstances

conspire to extend her stay and she settles into a rural school. She wins the devotion of the Clydesdale workhorse, Starr, a unifying strand in the three books. Aunt Marg, a compassionate woman of practical faith, guides the impetuous Margaret gently towards maturity while her sturdy, affectionate relationship with Uncle Herb, flavoured by their shared delight in jokes, eases Margaret's discontent at the lack of connection she feels with her own harried father. At the end of the first book a difficult choice must be made. Finally, assured of her parents' love and support, Margaret decides that on the farm she will find room to grow into the person she wants to be.

This generous-spirited and intelligent young woman is determined to channel her natural affinity for animals into a veterinary career. She wrestles convincingly with the jealousy that flares when her siblings' summer visits or the temporary addition to the farm family of an orphaned schoolmate threaten her with displacement. Hunter also touches feelingly on the issue of male prejudice. A reminder that women only got the vote in 1920 helps clarify for readers the societal backdrop against which the independent Margaret must battle, even against Aunt Marg who opposes Margaret's wearing overalls around the farm instead of a skirt.

The author, while setting her stories accurately in their period, and intriguing readers with references to horse-drawn delivery vans, "shinplasters," crystal radio sets, and cars that go 20 mph, also builds firm links between her 1920s character and present-day youth. Eaton's stores, a day at the Ex, a stay at the Hospital for Sick Children invite identification with Margaret's life, while her matter-of-fact acceptance of outdoor privvies and the absence of electricity on the farm nicely underlines differences.

Margaret shares the stage in these stories with the horse, Starr. Descriptions of his awesome size and strength, the sleek warm hide, the great kind eyes, the whickerings of excitement and snufflings of contentment ring true. When Margaret uses her secret signal to calm Starr in a burning barn or to exhort him to free himself from a snow-filled ditch, we are aware that these episodes are unlikely to reflect the norm in human-animal relationships but prepared to accept them as believable in the context Hunter creates between this particular girl and horse. The imagination is stretched, however, when Margaret sends Starr for help after breaking her leg or when she declares that she can turn the fifteen hundred pound horse during a bareback gallop by merely tweaking his ear. This is the stuff of romanticised animal fiction. Having said that, one must credit the author with knowing what appeals to juvenile (especially female) readers. What child is not entranced by the idea of winning the allegiance of an hitherto untameable beast? Margaret "magics" an ornery horse at the fair, and, with no training, successfully sews up a wounded fawn. Simplistic, certainly, but acceptable to the reader who still cherishes hope of being revealed in similarly effortless possession of a desired skill or talent.

The emotional range in all three Margaret novels is limited; melodrama looms during action highpoints. The language tends to be unenriched, sometimes trite ("a hearty breakfast"), and occasionally twee ("baby deer"). Though not always fully fleshed, Hunter's characters normally act from understandable motives. The teenaged Margaret's first-person narrative is often humorous and engaging and Hunter's overall style, though spare, is consistent, and accessible to readers from about age nine through to junior high.

Fans of Laura Ingalls Wilder's "Little House" books may be expected to take the Margaret trilogy to their hearts for their similar homespun simplicity, unequivocal morality, and warm family feeling, satisfying resolutions and quick dispatch of serious problems. Although without the depth of Montgomery's famous heroine, Margaret shares with spunky Anne her forthrightness, her sharply-honed sense of justice, and her desire to realize sometimes unsupported educational goals. Margaret, like Laura and Anne, is comfortingly portrayed as a girl who is bound to win through to happiness. Looking at the excellent photographic covers of this paperback reissue, one cannot help thinking what a wonderful television series the creators of the Avonlea programmes could make of Hunter's novels.

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RITE DE PASSAGE

Le coeur en bataille. Marie-Francine Hébert. Montréal, La courte échelle, 1990. 152 pp., broché. ISBN 2-89021-122-3.

Le coeur en bataille est le septième livre publié par Marie-Francine Hébert chez La courte échelle et fait partie de la collection Roman +. Ce texte, qui est destiné aux jeunes lecteurs à partir de treize ans, nous raconte la vie quotidienne – ordinaire, bien sûr, mais toujours très intéressante et mouvementée – de Léa, une jeune fille qui souffre toutes les douleurs associées aux rites de passage entre l'enfance et l'âge adulte.

Léa et son frère Max sont des adolescents tout à fait typiques. Leur mère est pédiatre; leur père est professeur. Mais la vie de Léa, au commencement du roman, n'est pas du tout heureuse. En effet, même les titres des chapitres indiquent clairement le chagrin de la jeune protagoniste et annoncent le voyage psychologique progressif qui débouchera finalement sur une attitude plus heureuse, plus indépendante, plus équilibrée: "Qui m'aime?", "La course contre la peine," "Si j'étais ma mère," "Touchez-moi, quelqu'un," "Papa, viens chercher ta fille!", "Un puits sans fond," "Le tunnel de lumière," "Sauve qui peut l'amour, " et "Allô! c'est moi."

La grande question que se pose Léa est, en effet, signalée par le titre du premier chapitre: "Qui m'aime?" Autrefois, elle passait des heures avec son frère qui avait l'habitude de la taquiner; autrefois, elle avait une meilleure amie, Isa, qui était comme une soeur. Mais maintenant Max et Isa sont amoureux l'un de l'autre et Léa se sent abandonnée. Il lui semble également que sa mère est occupée à secourir tout le monde à part elle et que l'ancienne tendresse de son père a maintenant disparu pour laisser toute la place à des leçons de morale. Et puis, surtout, il y a le grand problème des garçons: "...il n'y en a pas un seul qui daigne jeter le moindre regard sur moi. Je suis bien trop ordinaire" (p. 17).

Le rêve que fait Léa au début du texte est symbolique de son état psychologique et nous donne en même temps la motivation de l'intrigue du roman. Dans son rêve, elle s'ennuie toute seule à la maison quand elle entend un énorme bruit d'explosion et que la terre se met à trembler. Elle ouvre la porte pour sortir, mais il n'y a plus de marches, plus de perron, rien. Léa se réveille juste au moment où, dans son cauchemar, elle s'agrippe au chambranle, pour ne pas être aspirée par le vertige. En effet, elle se trouve au moment où l'adolescente est prête à faire ses premiers pas indépendants, à "sortir" de la maison familiale. D'une part, c'est un moment prévisible et normal pour Léa (elle est intelligente, bien aimée par ses parents et son frère; elle a de bons copains à l'école, une meilleure amie; elle a de très beaux cheveux longs; elle aime courir en écoutant son walkman), mais, d'autre part, c'est un moment terrifiant, le moment où la fille se sent tout à fait seule, très loin de la sécurité de sa vie enfantine. Léa explique qu'elle passe ses journées à faire semblant de rien, qu'elle garde son walkman sur les oreilles parce qu'elle a peur de se mettre à pleurer sans plus pouvoir s'arrêter. Selon elle, ses parents et ses profs appellent ça "être raisonnable" mais elle dit qu'un beau jour elle va éclater. ("J'en ai plus qu'assez de jouer les bonnes filles pour être aimée. De toute façon, ça ne marche pas" (p. 14).

Au cours du roman, Léa essaie donc de se définir comme un être indépendant et d'établir de nouveaux rapports avec ses parents et ses amis. Elle réussit, après bien des difficultés, à rétablir, mais sur un plan plus adulte, la complicité avec son frère et son amie Isa. Elle reconnaît aussi que ses parents ne sont pas parfaits – mais qu'ils sont quand même toujours là pour elle. Et, bien sûr, elle trouve son premier amour, Bruno Yves, "le plus beau gars de l'école."

Les thèmes de ce roman pour adolescents sont typiques: la distance qui s'ouvre entre les enfants de treize ans et leurs parents, la tendance des filles ou des garçons de cet âge à se sentir isolés et seuls, leur manque d'amour-propre, les difficultés de la vie "amoureuse," et la confusion devant le corps en proie aux changements physiologiques souvent bouleversants ("Depuis que j'ai deux petites bosses de chair sur la poitrine, tout le monde en fait une montagne. Depuis que j'ai mes règles, c'est comme si j'avais la lèpre ou le sida. Mon père

n'ose plus me toucher et il a une peur bleue que quelqu'un d'autre le fasse" (p. 17).

Pour Léa, à la fin du roman, au moment de passer la porte de la maison pour aller à son premier rendez-vous d'amour, le cauchemar du commencement du texte lui revient à l'esprit et elle se retient un moment, incapable d'avancer plus loin. Mais elle prend finalement une bonne respiration et sort en claquant la porte "assez fort que [s]a peur s'écroule comme un château de cartes" (p. 147). Ce récit, une sorte de *bildungsroman* contemporain en miniature, présente une lecture riche en expériences qui sera appréciée surtout par les filles de douze ou treize ans.

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SCI-FI PLUS

The live-forever machine. Kenneth Oppel. Kids Can Press, 1990. 223 pp., $4.95 paper. ISBN 1-55074-010-5.

Kenneth Oppel's *The live-forever machine* is a neatly crafted story that weaves together elements of the traditional epic, science fiction, and the contemporary adolescent novel. The story focuses on Eric, who lives with his father in a broken down house surrounded on all sides by modern highrises. Eric's house signals the past in which his father lives, writing stories about Eric's mother, who had died mysteriously some years earlier.

Eric spends a great deal of time in the museum, where he encounters two people, a boy and a man – each of whom has learned the secret of immortality. But the boy, Alexander, is a lover of the past, and to this end hordes the great treasures of history deep under the city; the man, Coil, wants to destroy the past; he looks only to the future.

The novel's action derives from the struggle to control the "live-forever machine," which had given both Alexander and Coil immortality. Eric, at first the willing pawn of Alexander, learns that Alexander in his holding on to the past is just as misguided as Coil. Consequently when Eric learns that his mother committed suicide, he is better able to respond to his father, who has been shaped in the present by obsessive concern with the past.

To a certain extent, the conflict of old and new is a bit tired. The idea of a desperate struggle of two almost allegorical figures representing the past and the future is hardly original. The accomplishment of the story is that Oppel convincingly brings the conflict into the modern urban world, integrating it with the very personal issues that Eric faces in living with a father who has

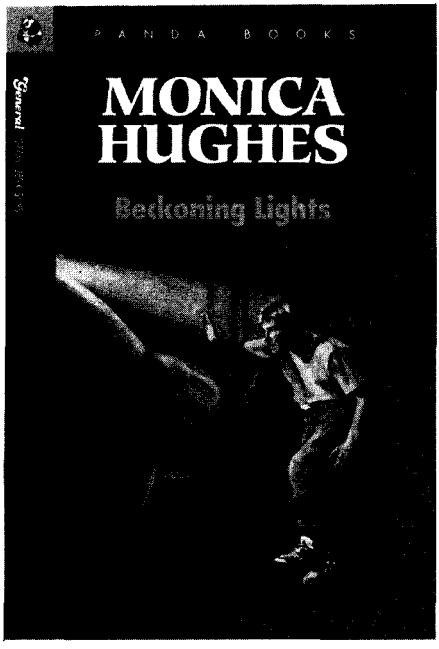
shut him out. Oppel is a good storyteller, always holding enough back to maintain interest and suspense. One does not, for example, discover who Alexander is for some time, even though Oppel provides a lot of hints. The struggle with Coil in the tunnels under the city, while echoing several recent television programs and films, is nonetheless action filled. Perhaps the only disappointment is the rather maudlin ending in which Eric, possessing new understanding, is able to rebuild his relationship with his father. Nothing in life is that easy.

The novel is sufficiently fast paced, and possesses enough science fiction and fairy tale to appeal to any adolescent. For the more thoughtful young reader, Oppel's message is not obtuse, yet he avoids being preachy or too obvious.

David W. Atkinson *is Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Saskatchewan.*

WHAT IS AN ALIEN?

Beckoning lights. Monica Hughes. General Paperbacks, 1990. 104 pp., $5.95 paper. ISBN 0-7736-7280-X.



Julia Christie tells how her foolhardy twin brother races to a landed UFO and is captured by aliens, leaving her with the mission of rescuing him, their father, and, ultimately, an entire race. She is a timid girl, particularly fearful of dark enclosed spaces – and she must face head on her claustrophobia to fulfill her quest by crawling through a narrow tunnel to collect a life-saving fungus. The gripping story delivers moral messages that are neither trite nor simplistic; indeed, Hughes shows remarkable skill in conveying sophisticated concepts in ways accessible to a young reader.

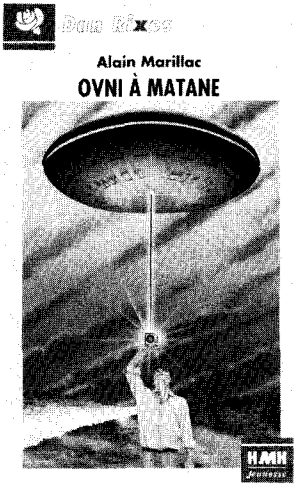
For example, she illustrates the essential aloneness of all human beings by Julia's discovery of how cut off she feels when her brother is for the first time too far away to be reached telepathically. As she realizes that the terrible isolation she experiences is the human norm, she feels a rush of pity for her fellows. To com-

fort her, her Stoney Indian companion, Doug Smalltree, tells her how his people pass into adulthood by undergoing a period of solitude when they must face their own strengths and weaknesses to discover who they really are. Thus Hughes conveys the idea that we are all alone inside our own skins and afraid, and that this circumstance gives us an opportunity to develop moral courage.

The source of Julia's identification with non-telepaths is her empathic imagination; and it is Barry Trevor's refusal to exercise his that marks him as the antagonist of the story. He disbelieves Julia's story because she is four years younger and a girl; and he is incapable of appreciating the tragic plight of the Brinians, who, as it turns out, are aliens in the sense of being of a different race, and yet not aliens because they evolved on earth millions of years before homo sapiens emerged. It means nothing to Barry that they are doomed to extinction because their colony planet lacks a mineral trace element available only on earth and that they voluntarily exiled themselves from earth to allow the human race its own unimpeded evolution. He can see them only as the Other, not as fellow earthlings, and therefore as objects of fear and hatred. His reactions to Julia and to the Brinians reflect common human behaviour, and he is rewarded with the usual object of human desire – wealth. Without falling into a moralistic tone, Hughes encourages in her readers disdain for such behaviour and such desire, as well as an acceptance and appreciation of difference.

Sandra Odegard *teaches Canadian, American, and British literature at the University of Guelph.*

DANS UN PROCHE AVENIR



Ovni à Matane. Alain Marillac. Illus. Richard Jalbert. Montréal, Hurtubise HMH, 1990. 166 pp., 8,95$ broché. ISBN 2-89045-870-9.

De la métropole de Paris au parc de Matane dans le nord du Québec, c'est un grand pas. Mais ce voyage dans l'espace n'est rien à côté de celui que les protagonistes de *OVNI à Matane* doivent faire dans le temps. En effet, ils se trouvent transportés en 2188. Avec l'effet de serre et la pollution générale provenant des pesticides et d'autres produits toxiques, la terre a subi une série de modifications: tous les continents sont brisés, San Francisco a disparu, le Japon est englouti et le Québec n'est plus qu'une île parmi d'autres plus

ou moins grandes. Dans le cadre futuriste, qui à l'époque actuelle n'est pas invraisemblable, Cheng, chef de la région, essaie tant bien que mal de défendre ses gens contre les attaques de Loyd Dover, chef d'une île située au sud qui recouvre les anciennes villes de Duluth, Minnéapolis, Omaha, Kansas City, Springfield, Norfolk, Pittsburg et Erie. Dover, un être assoiffé de pouvoir, s'apprête à porter ses derniers coups au moment où interviennent les jeunes gens.

Daniel Rixes et son amie Nathalie, une jeune journaliste, se proposent de pénétrer dans le palais de Dover dans le but de livrer ce dernier à Cheng. Soucoupes volantes, désintégrateurs et pistolets à champ d'énergie, champs de force, laser, pilules rouges contre la fatigue et pilules blanches pour la nutrition – tels sont les ingrédients futuristes de leur aventure, sans parler des Scatals, poissons-rougeurs qui voudraient inscrire "Dan" et "Nat" au menu du jour! Mais ils finissent par "ramener la paix dans cette région de leur futur."

Car, malgré le cadre spatio-temporel de cette science-fiction, il s'agit d'une thématique plus que millénaire, la lutte entre le bien et le mal. Daniel Rixes (dont les précédentes aventures sont racontées dans *La Pyramide de l'immatériel*) n'hésite pas à préciser: "La lutte contre les forces du mal nécessite toujours un porte-flambeau, un homme prêt à la lutte, qui alors a pour lui toutes les puissances du bien" (p. 138).

C'est une leçon qui ne manquera pas de plaire aux parents et aux éducateurs soucieux des lectures des adolescents. Et ce n'est pas le seul aspect positif du livre, comme l'attestent l'image de la femme reflétée par Nathalie, les bonnes relations entre le groupe de jeunes et le vieux Narcisse et l'amélioration des rapports entre Cheng et sa fille Ella.

Pourtant, au niveau événementiel, l'intrigue n'est pas toujours bien tissée. C'est par un drôle de hasard que le Français Patrice trouve à Paris un groupe de jeunes Québécois qui connaissent justement le parc de Matane dont il possède à son insu le plan. Et quelle coïncidence que Nathalie, une des jeunes soit assise à côté de Daniel Rixes dans l'avion qui les ramène à Montréal! Par ailleurs, comment se fait-il que Louise, restée avec Claude à Paris pour aller visiter l'Italie et peut-être même le Maroc, se trouve quelques jours plus tard à Saint-Jérôme, où deux des hommes de Dover sondent son cerveau pour scruter ses souvenirs? D'ailleurs, les nombreux personnages secondaires qui ne figurent qu'au début et à la fin du livre ne servent qu'à embrouiller le récit.

Malgré ces réserves, *Ovni à Matane* reste une aventure intéressante qui se déroule à un rythme allègre. En outre, le récit transmet un message salutaire.

Carol Harvey *est professeur de français à l'Université de Winnipeg, où elle enseigne la littérature médiévale et le roman contemporain.*

Notes

Dorothy Ivens Massee, author of three award-winning children's books, died last year in New Mexico. Once a member of the late Arthur Lismer's Toronto classes for gifted children, Mrs. Massee kept her ties to Canada, despite the fact that since her marriage to American writer William E. Massee in 1948, she spent most of her time in the United States.

Almost every year she and her husband returned to the Ivens family cottage in Bolsover, Ontario. This area was immortalized not only by her paintings, but also in her books for children: *The long hike* (Viking Press, 1956); *Bozy and all the children* (Viking, 1957); and *The upside down boy* (Viking, 1958). Written and illustrated by the author, these books reflect a life-long delight in the area where she and her younger brother spent summer vacations with their parents.

Born in Toronto in 1912, Dorothy Ivens showed marked literary and artistic talent at an early age. Arthur Lismer encouraged this flair. But she grew up during the depression, and family means were limited, so she endured a period of employment with an insurance agency, until she managed to attend the Art Students' League in New York in the days of Thomas Hart Benton.

Returning to Canada just before the commencement of the Second World War, she found employment as an artist with the talented group at Eatons, surrounding the French architect and painter, Rene Cera. The group created a series of spectacular displays in decorating the windows of the College Street store, unique in North America. Cera's support and encouragement made it possible for many young artists to remain in Canada including Harold Town, Norman MacLaren, Philip Hall, Irene Heywood, Nancy Burden, Michael McCrow, and others. In 1945 The College Street Fine Art Gallery presented the work of Cera's circle.

After the group disbanded, Dorothy Ivens went to New York, began designing covers for various magazines, met and married one of the young editors of *Esquire Magazine*, Bill Massee.

As public relations consultant to the wine and spirit trade, William Massee inevitably travelled a great deal and entertained frequently. When Mrs. Massee turned to write on food she was one of the three writers who won the National Award for the best cook book in 1969: *Glorious stew* (Harper and Row). The Massee home in New York was a mecca for those who loved good food and wine and fine paintings. Encouraged by her friend Marshall McLuhan, Dorothy Massee painted a number of works inspired by the writings of James Joyce.

After a final move to New Mexico she and her husband still managed to spend several weeks each summer at the family cottage at Bolsover, on the Trent Valley canal. She died February 11th, 1991, at the age of 78.

E. Hay Trott

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