

**Rereading** *Anne of Green Gables* in *Anne of Ingleside*:  
**L.M. Montgomery's Variations**  
—Perry Nodelman



In a novel by L.M. Montgomery, a new girl, an orphan, arrives in town. She is “not pretty but her appearance was striking” (163)—particularly her enormous eyes. Not satisfied with the confined nature of her life in an unsatisfactory new home, the orphan makes up exciting stories about her adventures that intrigue her new schoolmates—particularly a girl named Diana, who becomes the orphan’s best friend. But Diana’s relatives worry that the imaginative new friend may have “bewitched” her: and, indeed, she entices Diana into behaviour that distresses them.

That sounds like a summary of events in *Anne of Green Gables* (1908). It isn’t. The orphan is not Anne but Jenny Penny, a character in Montgomery’s last published novel, *Anne of Ingleside* (1939). The Diana she befriends is not Anne’s friend Diana Barry, but her namesake Diana Blythe, daughter of Anne and Gilbert.

Furthermore, Montgomery clearly intends Jenny’s story to have a different meaning from Anne’s—perhaps even the opposite meaning. When Marilla and other practical-minded adults condemn the misrepresentations of young Anne’s imagination in *Anne of Green Gables*, most readers easily understand how wrong they are. Anne’s fantasizing is exactly what makes her so lovable. But when an older Anne expresses concern about Jenny Penny’s “habit of exaggeration,” readers are invited to agree with her. Not only is Diana Blythe deeply hurt by her discovery that Jenny is lying, but after Anne tells her she won’t be punished for sneaking off to visit Jenny’s home because she’s already “learned [her] lesson” (180), Di reaches a conclusion that might well astonish readers of *Anne of Green Gables*: “Mummy is so sensible” (180).

And this adult Anne *is* sensible—a doctor’s wife

deeply and rather insufferably conscious of her prominent social position: “She did not want to make a snob of Di, but all she had heard about the Penny family had made her realize that as friends for the Ingleside children they were quite out of the question” (165). As Gillian Thomas suggests in her commentary on this episode, “It is a sad thought that, if the young Anne Shirley with her sharp eye for social hypocrisy were to meet her own grown-up self, she would probably not find that she was a ‘kindred spirit’” (41).

Thomas sees this as evidence that *Anne of Ingleside* is indeed the “pot-boiler” that Montgomery herself called it (Letter to Ephraim Weber [8 May 1939] 248).

In her journal, Montgomery expresses a much more positive attitude. She had stopped writing about Anne with *Rilla of Ingleside* (1921), the novel that represents the latest events chronologically in the lives of the characters. Fifteen years later, she filled in earlier episodes of Anne’s life in *Anne of Windy Poplars* (1936), and a few years after that, she began to do so again as she began work on *Anne of Ingleside*. After worrying in her journal, “What if I find I cannot write?” (*Selected Journals* [7 Sept. 1938] 277), Montgomery begins drafting *Anne of Ingleside*: “I can *still* write. I wrote a chapter. A burden rolled from my spirit. And I was suddenly *back in my own world* with all my dear

Avonlea and Glen folks again. It was like going home” (*Selected Journals* [12 Sept. 1938] 278). Her pleasure with the book continues throughout the writing process.

Nevertheless, Thomas’s claim that “the progressively unsatisfactory nature of the five *Anne* sequels reveals a good deal about why their forerunner was so successful” (37) echoes the dismissive opinions of many other critics. For instance, John Robert Sorfleet asserts that the “later books show a considerable falling-away from the qualities of the first” (554). Elizabeth Waterston says that *Anne of Windy Poplars* and *Anne of Ingleside* “have a warmed-over flavour” (“Lucy Maud Montgomery” 22) and that “there is little continuity” between the various episodes in *Anne of Ingleside* (Rubio and Waterston 287)—although, in her more recent book *Magic Island*, Waterston makes the more positive suggestion that “this late book has a new bite of realism and the extra appeal of ingenious structuring” (207). Muriel A. Whitaker claims that Anne is “a much less interesting character in subsequent books” (52), and T.D. MacLulich adds that Anne “becomes both less assertive and less interesting as she grows older” (16).

Montgomery herself was conscious enough of the difference between the older Anne and her more charming younger self to make it a major

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concern of the novel. Anne worries throughout *Anne of Ingleside* about having lost the qualities that might have made her kindred to the child Anne. She announces that her mirror tells her she's not as young as she was (2), tells a woman who claims that the springs aren't as nice as they once were that "perhaps the change is in us" (116), revels in "the exquisite sadness of fleeting beauty" (155), realizes that "the seasons that seemed so long to Baby Rilla were beginning to pass all too quickly for her" (157). At one point, she reaches a conclusion so un-Anne-like as to sound like a variation of King Lear's reality-accepting "ripeness is all": "Always change! You could not help it. You had to let the old go and take the new to your heart . . . learn to love it and then let it go in turn. Spring, lovely as it was, must yield to summer and summer lose itself in autumn. The birth . . . the bridal . . . the death. . . " (214).

But Anne moves beyond this theoretically mature form of wisdom in the last episode of the novel. Worrying that Gilbert no longer loves her,

she comes, with much bitterness, to believe that the "glamour" has gone out of her life (258) and that "[t]he gold of life had turned to withered leaves" (271)—the same withered leaves that Thomas and other commentators read in her character here. If Anne is less magical than she once was, both she and her creator are highly conscious of it—and very worried about it.

As it turns out, the withering is illusory. Ripeness is *not* all—youthful promise is, and spring, lovely as it is, must not yield to summer. Having got over her jealous worry that Gilbert no longer loves her, Anne discovers that life is "golden and rose and splendidly rainbowed again" (273)—not really changed after all. Nor has she herself changed. As we last see her, "In her white gown, with her hair in its two long braids, she looked like the *Anne of Green Gables* days . . . of Redmond days . . . of the House of Dreams days. That inward glow was still shining through her" (277). This last vision confirms what Anne's old friend Diana says in the first chapter of *Anne of Ingleside*, as

the two friends spend a nostalgic day revisiting their childhood haunts: “We’ve all changed so . . . except you. You never change, Anne” (4). The central thrust of *Anne of Ingleside* is the idea that, despite the passing of time and great differences in age, social position, and even apparently in values, the grown-up Anne is still in some important sense the same person she always was.

Intriguingly, furthermore, Diana’s comment and the novel’s upbeat conclusion both echo something the newly grown-up Anne said herself near the end of *Anne of Green Gables*: “I’m not a bit changed—not really. I’m only just pruned down and branched out. The real me—back here—is just the same” (304). The change of Anne from hoyden to matron in the series as a whole merely replicates the change from hoyden to relatively sensible teenager that has already occurred before, within the first book. Indeed, in claiming Anne’s victory in her early years over harsh experiences that would have embittered or destroyed other children, and in depicting her triumph later as she deals with and finds ways of moving beyond Matthew’s death and Marilla’s blindness, *Anne of Green Gables* is just as centrally about how Anne’s magic manages to conquer time and change as *Anne of Ingleside* is. The resemblances between the later novel and the first one are far more significant than the differences. Both focus on the

imaginings of children, the joys of parenthood, the gossip of neighbours, the trials and tribulations of matchmaking, and the beauties of nature. Both reach similar conclusions about them—as, indeed, do all the other books in the series.

Far from falling off, furthermore, I believe the later books become richer as they evoke and transform earlier ideas and images. Elizabeth Epperly says of *Anne of Ingleside* that “this late novel takes its reader deeply into what the initiated reader suspected but never saw in Anne’s thinking in the original series,” i.e., the *Anne* novels published by 1920 (*Through Lover’s Lane* 170), and Marah Gubar suggests that, rather than being a disorderly grab-bag with the lack of continuity Waterston laments, the apparently various episodes of *Anne of Ingleside* are “part of a larger pattern”—a pattern Gubar sees as involving “unsatisfactory and even damaging marriages” (61). I believe the pattern is larger even than that. The *Anne* novels sustain an ongoing subtlety and consistency because they operate as the literary equivalent of musical variations.

In *Through Lover’s Lane*, Epperly refers to the idea of variation to describe the recurrence of images of arches, circles or keyholes of light, and curving lines and bends in roads in Montgomery’s writing: “Montgomery used variations of these three shapes in photography and fiction, with

landscape and with houses, to suggest states of mind as well as places “ (8). But what, then, is a variation? According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a variation in music is “a modification with regard to the tune, time, and harmony of a theme, by which on repetition it appears in a new but still recognizable form.” As the musicologist Donald N. Ferguson suggests, “Each variation . . . presents not only the formal outlines of the theme but a distinctive character” (131). A set of variations represents a paradoxical combination of sameness and difference—an act of transformation that does but does not change identity. Similarly, the *Anne* books as a whole represent a continual reworking of the elements of the original, so that those elements come to be like Anne herself: they change without losing their essence. As a result, the shape and structure of the books mirror their theme: how to grow up without losing the child you once were.

Of the scenes in *Anne of Ingleside* in which women chat together, Jennie Rubio says, “The process of gossiping, which creates a text from pieces of unwritten history, is like quilting, which creates a new text from discarded bits of clothing. It is also similar to Montgomery’s own practice of novel-writing, converting snatches of human story and history, in the form of episodic chapters, into a whole text” (173). Like quilts, also, Montgomery’s

whole texts have intricately ordered patterns, such as the “ingenious structuring” Waterston finds in *Anne of Ingleside*: “It is,” she says in a description that might apply to many quilts, “built like a series of boxes within boxes, with a treasure at the centre” (Magic Island 207–8). These patterns organize the snatches of story into complex and meaningful sets of variations. In reading episodes in *Anne of Ingleside* as variations of other episodes in that novel—and also of *Anne of Green Gables*—my hope is that the variational relationships of the first and last published novels about Anne might begin to suggest how the Anne series as a whole can be read as a set of variations on the same central concerns.

### **Variation I: Lateral Movement**

As in most of Montgomery’s books, the plot of *Anne of Ingleside* moves less through the linear series of interrelated and increasingly suspenseful actions toward a climax that readers conventionally expect of fiction than it does laterally. By lateral, I mean that the novel is comprised of a series of disconnected and similar episodes, none of which is inherently more interesting or involving than the ones that precede and follow it. Each episode is separate enough so that any one of them could be eliminated, or more added, without seriously changing the effect of the

novel.

In many of these episodes, Anne's children experience surprisingly similar encounters with their own imaginations or the imaginations of others. Walter must deal with other children who laugh at his belief in fairies; Jem with the consequences of an imaginative lust for adventure and, later, his loss of faith in some false pearls he has imagined to be real; Nan with a graveyard her own imagination has made terrifying, an old woman her imagination has transformed into a romantic heroine, and another imaginative child's story that Nan was switched with another baby at birth. Di must deal not only with Jenny Penny, but also with Delilah Green, another child with distinctive eyes and a dangerous way of making Di believe her imaginative stories. And, at one point or another, each of Anne's children, including the very young Rilla, confronts a teasing mob of other children annoyed by the Blythes' difference from what they perceive as the norm.

These recurrent motifs are like the variational structures Edward Said describes in his report on a performance of Arabic songs that his Western-trained ear had trouble following. He sees these structures as evidence of

an aesthetic whose hallmark was exfoliating variation, in which repetition, a sort of

meditative fixation on one or two small patterns, and an almost total absence of developmental (in the Beethovenian sense) tension were the key elements. The point of the performance, I later realized, was not to get to the end of a carefully constructed logical structure—working through it—but to luxuriate in all sorts of byways, to linger over details and changes in text, to digress and then digress from the digression. (98)

It's this sort of luxuriating in byways, this lack of interest in sequential movement toward a logical end, that allows Montgomery to carry on writing further about Anne in book after book, and to go back in *Anne of Ingleside* to fill in events earlier than ones described in earlier books in the series. Mirroring its composition, the plot of *Anne of Ingleside* moves laterally from episode to episode by means of less-than-obvious metonymic connections that allow digressive variations on prior events.

Chapter 23, for instance, is an apparently random grab-bag of stories about pets and ship captains and birds in the house. It begins with a paragraph about pets that die—itsself connected metonymically to the previous chapter's story of how Anne is asked to write an obituary. The pet stories include one about how Walter tries to



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re-unite two toads separated by the housekeeper Susan's disapproval, a comical variation on his mother's habit of matchmaking, also described in an earlier chapter. Shortly after, we hear how Walter gives "The Hollow" a more romantic name, just as his mother once renamed places: "Rainbow Valley had become a world in itself to the children of Ingleside" (129), a statement reminiscent of one earlier in the book that this is "[a] very ordinary place . . . just 'the Hollow' to others but to them fairyland" (12). It becomes clear that the apparently diverse events of this chapter relate to each other and to the rest of the book as versions involving the Blythe children in experiences Anne herself has had before, both as a child and as an adult.

In particular, the idea that the Rainbow Valley of imagination is a world in itself to the children evokes many comments throughout the novel about how Ingleside, a place that "bloomed with firelight and laughter, though the winds come in from the Atlantic singing of mournful things" (62), is a secure, comforting haven for Anne and

the family as a whole. Seen as parallel to their safe home, the children's imaginative perception of Rainbow Valley becomes metonymically connected to ideas of what a home should be. Imagination is a safe place to escape into. In other words, through the use of similar language that operates variationally, Montgomery makes connections between ideas that are neither sequentially nor logically connected in her text.

Following the pet stories is a story of how old Captain Malachi tells Jem that "Ships are like weemen" (131)—an apparently directionless digression that actually contains two other variations. The first relates to a focus on veiled secrets that require a certain kind of perception to be seen and understood. Captain Malachi's idea that women and ships have secret lives apart from ordinary perception, and have "got to be understood and loved or they'll never give up their secrets" (131), parallels the idea that Rainbow Valley is "a world in itself." The parallel reinforces metonymic connections between imaginative perception, safe harbours against a bitter world,

and acceptable forms of human relationships. It also evokes earlier references to other surprising (and often sensuous, feminine, and emotional) “secrets” contained within apparently cold exteriors and perceivable only to the right eyes: to the bark of birches properly perceived by Anne, but not her friend Diana, as “tints ranging from purest creamy white [. . .] until the inmost layer revealed the deepest richest brown as if to tell that all birches, so maiden-like and cool exteriorly, had yet warm-hued feelings” (8–9); to “milky-white peonies with the blood-red flecks at their hearts, like a god’s kiss” (23); to a morning that “filled the secret hollow of snow among the hills with the red wine of winter sunrise” (70)—an image that also has metonymic connection, through the use of the word “hollow,” to the children’s secret world. Furthermore, Captain Malachi’s image connecting ships and women’s secrets looks ahead to Anne’s secret depression and loss of confidence, to which Gilbert remains blind, in the novel’s last episode—and also, at the very end of the novel, to the final return to the protective, enwombing world of Ingleside, and of Anne’s own “warm-hued feelings.”

The second variation implied by Captain Malachi’s words concerns freedom. Captain Malachi maintains that a woman will “fly from you like a bird” (131), an idea that illuminates

the actual experience of the Ingleside household, which, in Chapter 23, is trying to decide whether or not to allow a robin that lives in the house to go outside so that it can fly south. A few pages later, not surprisingly, the story of the bird who has freely adopted Ingleside but must now be allowed the freedom to leave is counterpointed by a story of how Jem tries to adopt a dog against the dog’s will. While male, the dog exactly parallels Captain Malachi’s description of women: “Bruno remained remote . . . inaccessible . . . a stranger” (135). Unable to penetrate past the cool exterior to a warm heart that remains determined to keep its secrets, Jem must learn to give the dog up, and his doing so manages to tie together the series of apparently disparate episodes that make up the chapter.

### **Variation II: Reversal, and the Reversal of Reversal**

It’s in the context of this digressive, metonymic, and variational form of development that the Jenny Penny episode I began with occurs. As a variation, Jenny is somehow both like and not like the child Anne. The similarities are obvious, but how might variation account for Montgomery’s different attitude toward Jenny?

One answer lies in how Montgomery describes her characters. In *Anne of Green Gables*, the focalization is intently on Anne as

she imaginatively perceives things. As Elizabeth Epperly suggests, readers “become part of the world of Avonlea as the powerfully imaginative Anne sees and loves it” (*Fragrance* 18), and the fact that readers usually share Anne’s point of view tends to discourage thinking about its negative effects. In *Anne of Ingleside*, in contrast, Montgomery tends to counterpoint the imaginative perceptions not only of Jenny, but also of Anne herself and of Anne’s own children, with views of these perceptions from the outside (many of those views, as in the case of Jenny, are Anne’s own—and are, therefore, presumably, to be trusted). To use Montgomery’s own image: at times, readers see the fairylands viewed as real by imaginative eyes as if they were real; at other times, they see the undeniable mundane reality of the places those fairylands distort. This contrapuntal focalization encourages readers to consider the negative implications of imagination as well as the positive ones—the problem with Jenny as well as the pleasure.

So why might Jenny be a problem? Montgomery refers frequently in this novel to “glamour”—the ability to transform bleak realities into imaginative delights that can create warm hearths in a cold world and offer insight into the secret warmth of apparently cool things. Anne feels that she is losing her glamour, and the word itself emerges

as a major focus in the narrative toward the end, when she not only thinks that “all the glamour was gone” (258), but also worries that her husband Gilbert is “lost in glamorous anticipation” (261) of meeting an old flame. She even expresses the opinion that modern men’s clothes are “[e]ntirely lacking in glamour” (263). Seen in relation to the mature Anne of *Anne of Ingleside*, Jenny represents a fulfillment of Anne’s fears. At first, Jenny has glamour for Di, to the extent that Anne says, “the Penny girl seems to have bewitched her” (166)—just, ironically, as Marilla says Anne has “bewitched” Matthew in *Anne of Green Gables* (80). But then, as Di sees the reality of Jenny’s home, “the glamour with which Jenny had been invested in her eyes was suddenly and irrevocably gone” (171); this is the only use of the word “glamour” prior to the many in the last sequence of the novel. Intriguingly, then, Jenny’s faltering glamour counterpoints Anne’s: Jenny falsely transforms her ugly home into a beautiful place, and, at the end of the novel, Anne’s loss of glamour falsely and temporarily transforms her beautiful home into an ugly place.

The inability of this young orphan to sustain her glamour, as Anne herself did in *Anne of Green Gables* but thinks she can no longer do now, points to the essential nature of the relationship between *Anne of Ingleside* and *Anne of Green*

*Gables*. Considered in terms of variation, just about everything that happens in the later novel represents an inversion or reversal of something that happened in the earlier one. The book begins with Anne visiting Green Gables and then leaving it. The earlier novel begins with her arrival and staying there. Furthermore, Anne's children, who figure centrally in many episodes of *Anne of Ingleside*, represent continual reversals of her actions in *Anne of Green Gables*. In both books, episodes involving cakes threaten relationships with young women whom children admire. But young Anne makes a bad one with liniment, while young Rilla spoils a perfectly good one by throwing it into a pond. In *Anne of Green Gables*, Anne is accused of losing Marilla's amethyst brooch and suffers from false accusations and counterfeiting guilt. In *Anne of Ingleside*, Jem gives Anne a piece of jewellery, but suffers real guilt when he discovers that the pearl necklace he thought real is false.

Above all, not only is there an imaginative orphan who cannot sustain her glamour and turns out to be a fraud in *Anne of Ingleside*, but there is also a difficult and repressive older woman who cannot be transformed by Anne's own glamour. Readers familiar with Anne's conquests of Marilla, Rachel Lynde, or Diana Barry's aunt in *Anne of Green Gables*; or of numerous other iron-willed,

isolated, or unhappy older women in the other books of the series, have little choice but to assume that she will have a similarly magical effect on Gilbert's Aunt Mary Maria. But the reverse happens. Aunt Mary Maria "took possession of the Ingleside guest room . . . and incidentally of all the other rooms in the house except Susan's" (23). Her iron will is so indomitable that Anne says, "She's simply poisoning our life here" (65), and "She makes me feel as if I didn't belong in my own home" (67). Furthermore, Aunt Mary Maria's "poison" is a dark form of Anne's own childlike glamour, and another version of Jenny Penny's dangerous bewitching. Jenny's rich imagination is full of what Anne thinks of as "absurd suggestions and ghoulish memories" (34), and the old lady's grim imaginings triumph over the younger Anne's reality. To complete the reversal, the novel makes Aunt Mary Maria appear childlike by the mention of her "childish curiosity about everything" (67).

A third reversal occurs in the episode in which Anne attempts to make a match between Stella Chase and Alden Churchill. She points out the irony herself, as she thinks "of all the matches I've made . . . or been accused of making" (87). But this time, it turns out that the people she's decided to bring together have already secretly become engaged to each other before she even begins. Anne's magic can't work, then. As in her response



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to Jenny Penny and her dealing with Aunt Mary Maria, her glamour isn't operative.

Furthermore, many episodes involving Anne's children represent a reversal of much of *Anne of Green Gables* by suggesting that the process of investing mundane reality with imagined glamour is dangerous. The only episode in *Anne of Green Gables* that seriously questions the consequences of imaginative vision, the description of Anne's walk through a place her imagination has transformed into a haunted wood, is paralleled in *Anne of Ingleside* by Anne's daughter Nan's walk through a graveyard her imagination has transformed into a place of terror.

According to Mary Rubio, "Anne's stay in Avonlea is a fascinating study of how one's imaginative perception of the world can in effect metamorphosize the actual structure of the world. One of the most exciting and satisfying aspects of the novel is Anne's transformation of an ordinary farm into a fairyland and of an inarticulate old bachelor and a cheerless old maid into people who can articulate their love" (94). If that's true

of *Anne of Green Gables*, then the presence in *Anne of Ingleside* of so many episodes exploring the limitations of imaginative perception suggest the essential nature of its variation from the first novel. In an earlier essay, I argued that *Anne of Green Gables* represented a sort of "progressive utopia" ("Progressive Utopia" 37). Transformed by Anne's imagination, things get better and better until the novel is almost over. As a reversal, *Anne of Ingleside* represents a progressive dystopia: transformed out of glamour and into the light of common day, things get worse and worse until the novel is almost over.

In this context, it's not surprising that Anne's thoughts turn so often to change and the passage of time as a source of pain—the opposite of the many changes that continually make things better as time passes through most of *Anne of Green Gables*. Pets die, children walk through graveyards, and, at one point, Anne is near death. Even those passages in *Anne of Ingleside* in which women meet together and gossip concern discussions of death and funerals. All this forms the background for an

exploration throughout the novel of the power of imaginative perception to triumph over change and death.

This exploration begins when Anne answers her friend Diana's comment that she never changes by saying, "It's all in the beholder's eye" (4). Montgomery confirms Anne's opinion by telling us, a few pages later, that Diana "did not see what Anne did" (8). In a particularly revealing set of variations on the theme of perception, at different times in the novel, each of Anne's children is alone in the moonlight and sees the familiar world differently, as a strange and disturbing place. For Di, "How strange the world was after dark!" (179). For Nan, "Rainbow Valley by night was not the friendly haunt of daytime" and "All around her lay a strange, dim, unknown land" (148). For Jem, there is "the long road that wound endlessly on through that strange white moonlit distance that was his own familiar Glen in daytime" (111). For Walter, "It was moonlight but the moonlight let you see things . . . and nothing looked familiar" (48). Anne also sees the world differently by moonlight—and more than once. In one episode, she sits in the night at a window, looking inward, and thinks, "there is always something a little strange about a moonlit room. Its whole personality is changed. It is not so friendly . . . so human. It is remote and aloof and wrapped up in

itself. Almost it regards you as an intruder" (213).

In all these episodes, imaginative perception is a change for the worse—a source of fear and pain, a consciousness of the scariness of the dark. Not accidentally, two of the episodes involving the children's night perceptions focus on shadows—shadows "so black and sharp they might fly up at you," (49) "shadows that would grasp at you if you trusted yourself among them" (149). These shadows are a variation of the language of Anne's own childhood encounter with the Haunted Wood: "The goblins of her fancy lurked in every shadow about her, reaching out their cold, fleshless hands to grasp the terrified small girl who had called them into being" (*Green Gables* 204). In the episode in *Anne of Ingleside* immediately preceding the one containing the grasping shadows, Anne's potentially fatal illness is described as "a nameless shadow [that] suddenly swooped and spread and darkened" (143). Not only can imaginative vision not conquer time, but it might also reveal the degree to which time conquers.

But, in a number of other episodes, Anne's own nighttime perceptions are more positive than those of her children—just as her own childhood imaginings tended to have more positive results than her children's. By and large, we discover, Anne has not changed. Overjoyed at finding Jem

after she thought he might have drowned, “Anne bent from her window for a thankful good-night look at the world before going to bed. [. . .] A sort of moonlit rapture was running through the trees in the Hollow” (33–34). Later, Anne, “looking dreamily over the lawn with eyes that, in spite of six children, were still very young, thought there was nothing in the world so slim and elfin as a very young lombardy poplar by moonlight” (87). And the novel ends with Anne again at a window, while “[b]elow her was the mystery and loveliness of a garden at night” (277). Paradoxically, Anne’s young eyes show her a happier nighttime world than her children’s eyes show them—perhaps because her position inside a safe window balances the non-constricting but frightening freedom the night world represents.

In light of the novel’s concern with death and the triumph of pragmatic reality over imaginative perception, these moments of positive imaginative vision—and this last episode in particular—are especially important. It’s not accidental that it does come at the end, and that it parallels, rather than reverses, the last moment of *Anne of Green Gables*, where Anne also sits at a window and enjoys the beauty of what she sees outside.

In fact, the last episode of *Anne of Ingleside* reverses all the previous reversals, almost as if the major theme of the first book makes a triumphant

return at the end: Anne is still capable of glamour, time has not conquered, imagination is a source of joy more than of terror, and imagination does, therefore, triumph over the pain and terror of so-called reality. In a way, the last sequence of *Anne of Ingleside* replicates the last sequence of *Anne of Green Gables*, which has already operated as a reversal of the earlier episodes in that book. For the first time, Anne experiences the “cold, sanctifying touch” (319) of sorrow, as Matthew dies. Montgomery says that after that touch, “no life is ever quite the same again” (319), yet Anne discovers that “the beautiful world of blossom and love and friendship had lost none of its power to please her fancy and thrill her heart” (322). The last episode of *Anne of Ingleside* represents a similar confrontation with the cold, sanctifying touch of reality as Anne worries about growing old and losing Gilbert (a variation on the pattern of failed and unsatisfactory marriages that Gubar identifies), and a similar triumph of imagination over the devastations of the passage of time.

The novel’s ending also celebrates the same values: staying home and caring for others are more meaningful and satisfying than ambition in the world at large. In *Anne of Green Gables*, Anne decides to give up her scholarship in order to keep Green Gables a safe home for herself and for Marilla. In *Anne of Ingleside*, Anne has worried

that her choice of motherhood might have indeed deprived her of her glamour—that Gilbert might be attracted to another woman who announces she is “not the maternal type” (266), who sees Anne’s life as a mother at home as limiting, and who asks Anne, “Do you really never feel that you want a broader life?” (267). When Anne’s glamour is finally restored, she revels in her motherhood, and sees a secure home as the best defence against the depredations of time and change:

soon the sharper, cooler nights of autumn would come; then the deep snow . . . the deep white snow . . . the deep cold snow of winter . . . nights wild with wind and storm. But who would care? There would be the magic of firelight in gracious rooms. [. . .] What would matter drifted snow and biting wind when love burned clear and bright, with spring beyond? And all the little sweetness of life sprinkling the road. (277)

Here at the end, as in earlier passages, Montgomery represents home and motherhood with the same images of light, fire, and spring that she has used throughout the novel to describe both the world as seen through the glamour of imaginative thinking and the secret sensual warmth at the heart of apparently cold, mundane exteriors.

Indeed, it’s exactly that odd combination that most defines *Anne of Ingleside* as a variation on *Anne of Green Gables*. In the last episode of the first book, and throughout the later one, Anne has had to grapple with circumstances that seem to place what Montgomery later comes to call “glamour” and female domesticity at odds with each other. It might even be argued that numerous earlier episodes of *Anne of Green Gables* similarly express the same opposition. Like the one involving the liniment cake, many of the humorous episodes place Anne’s dreamy imaginativeness at odds with the duties of housekeeping. But both *Anne of Green Gables* and *Anne of Ingleside* conclude with the two related to each other, not only both seen as part of the same thing, but also both in opposition to forces of death and destruction.

### **Variation III: Unpacking**

As well as playing its part in relating *Anne of Ingleside* to *Anne of Green Gables* in a variation of reversal and then correspondence, the Jenny Penny episode represents yet another form of variation, one that reveals even more about the centrality of variations in the *Anne* series as a whole. One significant difference between Jenny and the younger Anne that I’ve not yet mentioned is that the younger Anne did not live in the same space

as the older Anne. But Anne *does* exist in Jenny's world—and since Anne is still, Montgomery insists, unchangingly Anne, Jenny must be somebody different. While Jenny has Anne's ability to improve the world through imaginative versions of it, she lacks the other major component of Anne's imagination: a delight in natural beauty. Jenny can invent a pleasing world of her own, but not see the real one through sensitive eyes and take pleasure from it. Significantly, furthermore, Montgomery lets us know this by showing Jenny to be impatient with *another* child's response to a landscape. Seeing a beautiful scene, Anne's daughter Di, who is "just wakening to a perception of the loveliness of the world, was enraptured" (169); but when Di invites Jenny to admire the view, she says, "Just a lot of old trees and cows. I've seen it a hundred times. You're awful funny by spells, Di Blythe. I don't want to hurt your feelings, but sometimes I think you're not all there. I really do. But I s'pose you can't help it. They say your ma is always raving like that" (169). Paradoxically, Jenny, who seems like Anne, criticizes Di for being like Anne. In fact, Anne is "not all there" in either girl. Each girl represents just one aspect of Anne.

What Montgomery does here is what she does again and again throughout the series—explore new byways and engender new episodes by unpacking or separating out the various

characteristics of the Anne of the first book and giving them to different characters who then interact with each other. In *Anne of Avonlea*, for instance, there are four orphans instead of the one *Anne of Green Gables*. Davy is feisty and inquiring, Dora is a delicately beautiful female, and Paul is poetic; their differing actions and Anne's differing responses to them replace her own internal conflicts in the first book. In *Rainbow Valley*, similarly, we have not only Anne's own children as unpacked versions of her former self, but also the Meredith children, whose differing characteristics both complement and counterpoint the Blythes. Furthermore, Rosamund Bailey suggests that the orphan Mary Vance "not only dominates much of the book but also represents a bold, battered version of Anne Shirley" (8). Bailey points out how Anne and Mary together make up one complete Anne: "this silly little girl has figured prominently in the novel, despite the author's efforts to keep her in her place. In contrast, Anne Blythe (the nominal heroine) is almost completely passive. It is Mary who fulfills, however imperfectly, the role that Mrs. Blythe supposedly adopts: sympathetic friend and champion of the Meredith family" (11). Mary Vance could figure just as centrally as Jenny Penny in a study of variation in the series.

The Jenny Penny episode involves three

characters. Jenny has the younger Anne's imagination and Di has her love of nature, and the older Anne has the younger one's practicality, deftness in understanding and handling young children, and fierce protectiveness (for Di is right, after all; although I suspect most readers tend to forget it, Anne was often "so sensible," especially in regard to looking after younger children, even as a child). The episode can be read as an exteriorizing of the sorts of conflicts that are internal to Anne in *Anne of Green Gables*.

Thus, Jenny's imaginativeness removes her from a perception of reality—a perception Di's love of nature provides her with. In fact, Montgomery builds the entire episode around what the two girls see through their different eyes. Di gives in to temptation and accompanies Jenny home after "Jenny turned the full battery of her extraordinary eyes upon Di" (168); but later, when "the glamour with which Jenny had been invested in her eyes was suddenly and irrevocably gone" (171), "the spell of Jenny's eyes was broken. Never again would Di succumb to its magic" (176). On the other hand, Jenny's eyes can see neither the natural beauty Di can nor the reality of her own house: "Jenny seemed quite unconscious of any discrepancy between her descriptions and reality" (170). Later, when Jenny and her siblings carry a supposedly unconscious Diana home, they are too

blind to realize that she is actually awake.

In another unpacking, the first sequence of the novel establishes its theme by showing us a middle-aged Anne feeling somewhat alien from the haunts of her childhood self. She exteriorizes her feelings about this separation when she says, "Wouldn't it be fun, Diana, if now, as we went home, we were to meet our old selves running along Lover's Lane?" (13). Later, Anne confronts her dreamy romanticizing in another exteriorized form, as Mrs. Mitchell asks her to write an obituary for her husband, a man who "cared more for his trees than for me" (119). Indeed, the pinning down of the dreamy Mitchell in a successful but decidedly unromantic marriage to an unimaginative woman represents an unpacked version of Anne's central internal problem in this book: negotiating the apparent distance between her need for romantic glamour and commitment to the practicalities of family life. Not surprisingly in this context, yet another dreamy romantic, Myra Murray, represents this aspect of Anne's character at a quilting bee, while a purely domestic Anne supervises the preparation of a supper in the kitchen. Like Anne, Myra "could tell the simplest story and make it seem dramatic and vital" (199); she also believes that being born under the stars would be delightfully romantic (207).

A particularly curious version of unpacking



The ending of *Anne of Ingleside* represents a similar re-packing—a coming together of separated aspects of Anne that confirms the triumphant return of her magical powers.



occurs in an episode involving Anne's daughter Nan. Nan is persuaded by yet another dangerously imaginative child that she is in fact not herself—that she was switched with another child at birth: “You are Cassie Thomas and *she* is Nan Blythe” (186). This situation separates Nan's existence as a child of Ingleside from her sense of herself as a person, and the unpacking forces Nan into a consideration of her identity that counterpoints Anne's own earlier imagined encounter with her younger self: “It made Nan feel awful beyond description to think of Cassie Thomas as being Nan Blythe. She felt as if it blotted her out altogether. If she wasn't Nan Blythe she wasn't anybody! She would *not* be Cassie Thomas” (189). Happily, the separated aspects of Nan's character quickly come together again. The ending of *Anne of Ingleside* represents a similar re-packing—a coming together of separated aspects of Anne that confirms the triumphant return of her magical powers. It involves two characters with whom readers of Montgomery will be familiar: a woman aged by time into a world of unglamorous sterility, and a

childlike spirit able to rekindle the older woman's lost joy. But this time, both of these characters are Anne: the ending of the novel unifies the younger self and the older one, thought—at the beginning—to be hopelessly separate.

As a wind “like a shrewish old woman” (258) snarls around Ingleside, Anne snarls shrewishly at her children inside, worries that she is getting wrinkles, and is convinced that the “Anne-girl” she once was has disappeared along with Gilbert's habit of calling her by that name. Not surprisingly, then, Gilbert's old flame Christine's “air seemed to relegate Anne to the generation of aunts” (266), and Anne compares herself to one of those old decaying houses that so many of the old women she regenerated earlier have dwelled in: “They passed an old deserted house with sad and broken windows that had once danced with light. ‘Just like my life,’ thought Anne” (270).

As Anne realizes that Gilbert still perceives her as “Anne-girl,” the girl returns—and her glamour transforms the old lady into her former self. The Anne who sits in braids at the window

at the end is a re-unified combination of the young magical perceiver and the wrinkled older woman. Furthermore, these two aspects of Anne's character—the childlike imagination and the practical housekeeper—parallel the poetic warmth and the motherly practicality that Montgomery identifies with each other in the other two variational patterns I discussed earlier. In all three cases, then, variation allows Montgomery to bring together those two apparent opposites: the wild imaginativeness of night and the warm security of home that meet in the mind of a woman sitting in a window.

### **Implications: the *Anne* Books as Children's Literature**

As I've suggested, lateral movement through metonymic digression prevents Montgomery's writing from achieving the suspenseful thrust forward conventionally identified with successfully constructed plots. But Edward Said, who identifies the similarly shaped conventional sonata forms of music with "a disciplinary essentialization of coercive development" (100), sees the digressive movements of variation as a "way of getting away from the coerciveness of sonata form. . . . [an] alternative formation in music in which the linear, nondevelopmental uses of theme or melody dissipate and delay a disciplined organization of

musical time that is principally combative as well as dominative" (102). It seems safe to conclude that what the *Anne* books lack in dominative energy they gain in variational freedom.

Furthermore, as I argue in *The Hidden Adult*, the telling of stories that relate to each other as repetitive but different variations is profoundly characteristic of a form of fiction commentators don't readily associate with books, such as *Anne of Ingleside*, that focus on married women and their problems: children's fiction, which, while usually about children, tends to develop in episodes within books and then in series.

While it is about a young person, the status of *Anne of Green Gables* as a text for young people is questionable. Montgomery herself told her pen pal Ephraim Weber that it was "merely a juvenilish story, ostensibly for girls" (51), but she hoped that "grown-ups may like it a little" (52).

In fact, it reveals the ambiguous status of its implied audience in its affiliations with other literature that it might be said to operate as a variation on. In "Progressive Utopia," I explore *Anne of Green Gables's* adherence to the formula of earlier books about girls with similarly uncertain implied audiences. As Irene Gammel says, furthermore, Montgomery, as author and reader of many popular magazines of her day, was also "intimately familiar with the typical Victorian

sacrifice tale" (187) and "the ephemera of *Godey's Lady's Book* (211). Gammel adds that Anne, while "a truly original character," is also "a paradoxically distilled version of a long line of orphan stories" (219).

Still, as a book about a child and youth, *Anne of Green Gables* seems far more clearly a text for younger readers than do the later novels in the series about the experiences of an adult Anne; and in any case, the adherence to formula throughout the *Anne* books may merely reveal their affiliations with texts of popular literature generally. Nevertheless, many young people have gone on to read and enjoy the later *Anne* books after their experience of the first one; and many articles about those later books have appeared in this journal with the phrase "children's literature" in its title. I suspect that those things happen because, despite the adult concerns of their adult protagonist, the specific uses these novels make of variational structures make them into something like children's literature, a kind of text that, as I argue in *The Hidden Adult*, shares but significantly varies from the conventions of popular literature.

In *Anne of Green Gables*, Anne says, "There's such a lot of different Annes in me. I sometimes think that's why I'm such a troublesome person. If I was just one Anne it would be ever so much more comfortable, but then it wouldn't be half so

interesting" (161). But the various one-dimensional unpackings of Anne of the later books, less interesting as characters considered in themselves, do create interest in relation to each other. They do so in a way readers of both popular literature generally and children's literature specifically will recognize, in episodes that focus on the actions and interactions rather than on the interior complexities of any of their characters. But since these characters are in fact variational unpackings of the original Anne—because they operate in variational relationships to themselves and to characters in earlier novels—they make the *Anne* books seem like children's literature even when they centrally involve the worries of an aging mother.

Furthermore, and as most conventionally happens in children's literature, the characters separated and isolated by the unpacking process tend to end in communion. In the Jenny Penny episode in *Anne of Ingleside*, for instance, each of the different kinds of individual perception experienced by Jenny, Di, and Anne isolate them from each other and from contact with other people; but the effect of the action between them is to isolate Jenny, the character who is unregenerately unable to see anything more than she imagines, and to bring those who *can* see beyond their own perceptions, Anne and Di,



Like a surprising amount of children's literature, much of Montgomery's writing operates as a sort of anti-*bildungsroman*, as characters move again and again from isolated and self-governing independence into loving but narrow communities.



into contact with each other. In other words, this episode parallels the triumph of communal values over self-concern that recurs in scenes throughout the novel in which children alone in the dark of night end up safely home, and that recurs once more for Anne in the novel's last episode.

Like a surprising amount of children's literature, much of Montgomery's writing operates as a sort of anti-*bildungsroman*, as characters move again and again from isolated and self-governing independence into loving but narrow communities. Her characters start as children without parents, women without husbands, parents without children; all are removed from the margins that isolate them and become involved in a community. Furthermore, and perhaps paradoxically, the communities they all end up belonging to are small, isolated, not influenced all that much (except dangerously) by the events and values of the big world out there. It is a retreat from the big world into an enclosed space—a Green Gables, a house of dreams, an Ingleside, where a small group

comes together in a tight, enclosed group of like-minded people. Thus, isolates find companionship and experience freedom in communities that are themselves safely isolated from the dangerous community and freedom of society at large. *Anne of Ingleside's* recurring images of hidden warmth at the secret, secluded heart of cold things sum up the essence of Montgomery's vision and values.

It also sums up the images of the homes child characters start from and end up with in conventional children's literature throughout its history, and the ideal of a safely protected childhood innocence those images work to support and sustain. For that reason, it works well as a metaphor for the place children's literature came into existence to occupy in the lives of children and in the world of literature at large. Once more, the central magic of the *Anne* series is its ability to sustain the conventions of children's literature in the context of descriptions of adult life.

As I argue in *The Hidden Adult*, I suspect that the variational tendencies of children's literature

result from a contradiction that is central to our very concepts of childhood. Childhood is innocent, an utopia eternally attractive to nostalgic adults simply because it is everything that adult life is not. And/or: it is merely ignorant, not more than but much less than adulthood; and adults must teach children how to grow beyond it. Children's literature, therefore, most characteristically both celebrates the joys of childhood as perceived by nostalgic adults and works to bring those joys to an end.

Less interesting children's books tend to settle on one side of this contradiction or the other, and either revel in suffocating nostalgia or enforce a rigid didacticism. The more interesting ones try to have it both ways—or move in an unsettled and pleasurable manner between one pole and the other. The result of this fluctuation between the joys of eternal childhood and the necessity of growth into maturity, the wish to have both and the inability to choose between them, is often exactly the sort of variation found in the *Anne* books. Montgomery insists throughout that Anne, whatever her age, never really changes at all—doesn't actually grow up. Furthermore, the shape echoes the subject; by means of variation, Anne and her friends move forward in time, and become theoretically mature, without ever encountering anything but different versions of the

same old experiences, reworked enough to create the illusion of development but similar enough to reach the same old conclusions.

Or, perhaps, the same conclusions understood in a deeper and more complex way. In his novel *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, Milan Kundera describes how variation can be a means of achieving depth as he compares his own work to a set of variations by Beethoven: "You recall Pascal's *pensée* about how man lives between the abyss of the infinitely large and the infinitely small. The journey of the variation form leads to that second infinity, the infinity of internal variety concealed in all things" (164). It is this infinity that Montgomery explores and makes her theme. Equipped with a childlike ability to expand her little world imaginatively, again and again, Anne chooses the internal delights of the second infinity over the theoretically wider possibilities of the exterior one—and finds the little encounters of her little domestic world as rich and richly interesting as grand adventures in the world outside.

For Kundera, "The journey to the second infinity is no less adventurous than the journey of the epic, and closely parallels the physicist's descent into the wondrous innards of the atom. With every variation Beethoven moves farther and farther from the original theme, which bears no more resemblance to the final variation than a

flower to its image under the microscope" (164). Similarly, the wine in the hollow of the snow, the pink flecks at the heart of peonies, the warmth at the heart of Ingleside, the changing child inside Anne's aging exterior, bear little relationship to what they seem to be on the outside: variations

allow us into their hearts and into the rich depths of their possible meanings. In the *Anne* books and especially in *Anne of Ingleside*, Montgomery uses patterns and themes conventional in children's literature, but uses them to make something surprisingly unconventional.

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