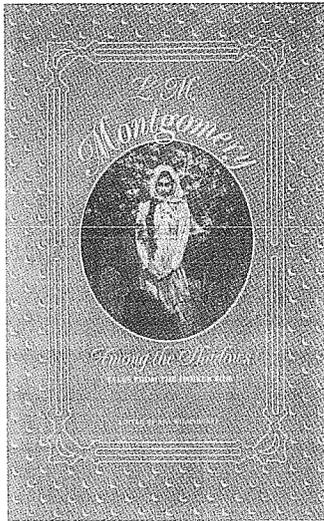


The second shortcoming of the book is equally understandable, though perhaps more regrettable. The Joly family was firmly anchored in the aristocracy of Quebec. If it is clear that the author sees no drawback to the privilege the children unconsciously enjoyed, we ourselves may be sorry not to have here a slightly broader view of Quebec society in 1872. The children's Irish nanny at one point "scolded them for getting mixed up with 'a pack of dirty ruffians'" who were the local children, and lectured them "on how Christian children of good family ought to behave." It was a very protected childhood the Joly children had; the historic images of it that are afforded us here are full of warm human interest but offer little breadth in the way of real history.

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MONTGOMERY ON THE DARK SIDE

Among the shadows: Tales from the darker side. L.M. Montgomery. Ed., Rea Wilmshurst. McClelland and Stewart, 1990. 310 pp., \$24.95 cloth. ISBN 0-7710-6155-2.



L.M. Montgomery was intrigued by the "darker side" of personalities and situations as her novels, journals, and letters suggest. Anne Shirley is fascinated as child and adult by the eerie and inexplicable, and Emily Byrd Starr is psychic; Montgomery herself tried ouija boards and table rapping and believed that she had felt the loving spirit of Frede Campbell near her after Frede's death. In this third volume of republished short stories collected and edited by Rea Wilmshurst, we find a Montgomery who wanted to evoke the pleasant chill of a brush with the unknown. Within these nineteen magazine pieces the "unknown" may mean peculiarly twisted coincidences, perplexing human emotions, or encounters with another dimension.

As in the other two volumes of Wilmshurst's editions of Montgomery's stories, here, too, we find pieces published as early as 1897 and as late as 1935; some have third-person, some first-person narration; some have compelling dialogue and inspired descriptions, others are melodramatic and overdrawn. Contrasts in subject matter empha-

size the unevenness in the writing. The 1897 story "The red room" is an unrelieved Gothic of the stagy hectic kind that Anne and Emily were admonished not to read. It shares space in this collection with the comic tale of a fanatical Temperance worker and church deacon who accidentally gets drunk on alcohol he mistakenly believes to be stomach medicine. The very first story of the volume, "The closed door," suggests the mixed quality of several of the pieces themselves. Unbelievable, melodramatic dialogue ("... my doubt has eaten into my soul all these years like a corroding rust") pushes along a creaking plot about a missing Oriental pearl and a villain who wears "the Rajah's rings," and yet in the same story Montgomery can make the scalp crinkle when she describes how the children wander into the past as they take a strange path in a familiar woodland.

Beside the mysteries and the one comedy, we find sentimental romances about love potions or chance discoveries or unrequited love or reclamations of heart (one of an embezzler, one of a murderer, another of a young man who has never been given a chance, and yet another of a woman who has found love just as she dies). There is one fairly chilling ghost story, "The house party at Smoky Island," and one fine piece of psychological drama, "From out the silence," which depicts a love between two women friends that outlasts misunderstanding and death.

Montgomery was a professional writer and she obviously designed many of these stories to sell to particular audiences. The joy of reading them in a collection such as this, neatly and capably edited and introduced by Rea Wilmshurst, is that we can see clearly where Montgomery chose to manipulate material to make a quick, slick read, and where she challenged her highest gifts of insight and characterization and description. As always with Montgomery's work, there are sure to be gems amid the sand.

Elizabeth R. Epperly, *Acting Head of English at Memorial University of Newfoundland*, is a co-editor of *Montgomery's letters and has recently completed a study of Montgomery's heroines and romance*.

UN BEAU TEXTE ET UNE BONNE LEÇON

Une blouson dans la peau. Marie-Francine Hébert. Illus. Philippe Germain. La courte échelle, 1989. 63 pp. ISBN 2-89021-098-7.

Marie-Francine Hébert, dans son deuxième roman, *Un blouson dans la peau*, nous raconte encore une autre aventure de son héroïne d'*Un monstre dans les céréales*, Méli Mélo. Le récit est admirablement accompagné des illustrations vives et humoristiques de Philippe Germain.

Cette fois-ci, il s'agit de blousons magiques qui permettent à celui qui les