

The Richness and Magnitude of Lucy Maud Montgomery's Legacy

The Lucy Maud Montgomery Album. Compiled by Kevin McCabe. Ed. Alexandra Heilbron. Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside 1999. 531 pp. \$46. ISBN 1-55041-386-4.

The Lucy Maud Montgomery Album, classified as biography, relies heavily on Montgomery's personal journals (over 340 references). Given the comprehensiveness of this work, one is hard-pressed to find the compiler's and editor's organizing principle, or determine the audience for which the book is designed. The individual chapters purportedly treat specific periods of Montgomery's life, but since contributors did not have access to other entries, there is overlapping of material and an unevenness in style of presentation. Each of the twelve chapters includes between six and eleven entries which on first reading appear eclectic. Although there is no cross-referencing, there is a good, albeit somewhat confusing index.

Even the compiler, Kevin McCabe, who contributed eighteen entries, echoes my initial reaction to the volume by referring to it as "this whole sprawling mass" (Acknowledgements 523). Nonetheless, it was McCabe's reminiscences of a tour taken by participants at the L.M. Montgomery Conference held at The University of Prince Edward Island in 1996 which helped me envisage how readers of varied backgrounds and interests will respond to and use this album ("A Pilgrimage to L.M. Montgomery's Island," Chapter I, 14-20). For example, as a member of that tour, I can refer to my own snapshots and reminiscences to augment, enhance, and compare with those included in *The Lucy Maud Montgomery Album*. I have pursued avenues of research first discovered at Montgomery's birthplace in New London in discussion with Father Bolger (entry p. 21), have made inquiries of Ruth and George Campbell about permission to copy materials found at Park Corner (entry p. 36), and, like Kevin, that day in the company of other Montgomery scholars, I viewed somewhat nostalgically the many picturesque haunts of Lucy Maud Montgomery.

Thus, while for the novice this album will serve as introduction to Montgomery's world, for her fans, among them Montgomery scholars, it will provide a means of revisiting the familiar yet possibly unexplored facets of her personal life, her writing, and her cultural milieu. The volume will also appeal to those interested in film versions of *Anne* (333-335), *Anne of Green Gables*, the Musical (336-345), the Sullivan television productions (346-371), Montgomery's international reputation (432-464), the commemorative events associated with the various Montgomery Historical Sites (374-394), and profiles of major Montgomery scholars. Also included is information on Montgomery's public and private selves, her household management, financial and family issues, and some favourite recipes. Of particular interest to me were samples of Montgomery's weekly "Cynthia" "Around the Table" columns which appeared in the Halifax *Echo* in 1901-02 (160); the article on the "Fashions of L.M. Montgomery" by Jonathan Walford (70); the letters to Penzie Macneill penned by eleven-year-old Maud (63); Kevin McCabe's entries on Montgomery's father and his business dealings (82), and on the attitude to ethnic minorities in Montgomery's writing (461); and the account of Montgomery's visit to Boston from *The Republic* Saturday, Nov. 19, 1910 (206).

This veritable "potpourri" album reflects the eclecticism of Montgomery's own newspaper column, personal journals, scrapbooks, and correspondence with

Ephraim Weber and George MacMillan. The photographs (over 400), many of them Montgomery's own, are one of its outstanding features, although the layout can be hard on the eyes if one is reading it from cover to cover. The editors have attempted to give *The Album* the appearance of an old-fashioned scrapbook (see pages 113-117 for excellent reproductions of pages of Montgomery's own scrapbooks), but on one page (179) text has been lost by placing a picture directly over the words.

Despite its many idiosyncrasies, this coffee table album with its new information on Montgomery's schooling, friendships, letter-writing, journals, photography, and family life will have something to offer every reader. Of particular significance is the fact that among the many voices the reader of this album is privileged to hear, Montgomery's own voice predominates.

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Unlikely, Uneven, Yet Readable

Lucy Maud and Me. Mary Frances Coady. Beach Holme, 1999. 120 pp. \$8.95. paper. ISBN 0-88878-398-1.

I expected *Lucy Maud and Me* to be a fictional biography that would water down and sweeten Montgomery's journals to fit into twelve-year-old Laura's story. When I discovered that Montgomery herself — Mrs. Macdonald of wartime Toronto of the early spring of 1940 — was going to tell Laura about her life, I was even more sceptical.

By the time I finished the book, I actually wished that Montgomery could have had just such a little girl appear in her very last earthly week to cheer her by "bringing spring back into my life" (119).

Watered down and sweetened, this story is not. It may be too compressed, but not with joy. We see deranged Ewan Macdonald through a crack in the door, and we hear him moaning. At the end, the maid bluntly tells Laura that Mr. Macdonald has "gone crazy" (112). Laura's grandfather tries to explain to Laura some of "poor Maud's" unhappiness, even registering that it could not have been easy for her to have lived with a man who did not value her writing and may have resented being in her shadow.

Coady's picture of Montgomery is sometimes unconvincing. At first Mrs. Macdonald is gruff and rude. But within minutes, the brusque, impatient Maud beams: "well, to use a phrase you might be familiar with — I think you're a 'kindred spirit'" (29). Would discrete Mrs. Macdonald, who hid her husband's bouts of illness from two congregations, really have said so offhandedly to Laura: