

“I Knew I Would ‘Arrive’ Some Day”: L.M. Montgomery and the Strategies of Literary Celebrity

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Résumé : Cet article propose une nouvelle analyse du rôle de L.M. Montgomery en tant que personnage littéraire célèbre. Contrairement aux autres modèles d’accession à la célébrité, imposée soit par l’institution littéraire ou la pression du public, l’examen des comportements et de l’attitude de la romancière met en relief un cas bien particulier. En effet, Montgomery a participé activement à la commercialisation de ses œuvres, mais tout en sachant élaborer sa propre stratégie afin d’influencer ce processus d’accession à la célébrité. Ainsi, loin de se laisser enfermer dans une image définie de l’extérieur, elle a su construire et faire triompher la sienne propre.

Summary: The literary celebrity of L.M. Montgomery has been briefly summarized and memorialized, but it has not been closely analyzed as a phenomenon in its own right with connections to other systems of celebrity. Montgomery’s celebrity disrupts the typical binary understanding of celebrity as either produced topdown by hegemonic powers or created by the urgent demands and desires of an audience. Not only did Montgomery intervene in her celebrity by agreeing to participate in the commercialization of her work, but she developed a strategic and remarkably intelligent negotiation with the celebrity processes that surrounded and in part tried to define her.

In her contribution to the collection of essays *Making Avonlea: L.M. Montgomery and Popular Culture* (2002), E. Holly Pike performs a valuable service to students of L.M. Montgomery by opening up Montgomery’s literary celebrity for sustained analysis. Typically, Montgomery’s celebrity has been briefly summarized, assumed and memorialized, but it has rarely been closely analyzed as a phenomenon in its own right, with connections

to other systems of celebrity. Pike, for her part, is specifically interested in the operations of celebrity in the literary field; in particular, she seeks to explore how Montgomery's Boston publishers created "a suitable authorial persona to market the books . . . based on the demands of mass marketing" (239). Such an analysis would seem to suggest a theory of stars being manufactured by hegemonic interests, but Pike is unwilling to depict Montgomery as merely the passive product of top-down literary marketing. As she proposes, "Montgomery was aware of the disparity between the marketing persona and herself" (244), and she also suggests that Montgomery "had accepted and actively shaped her role as a celebrity," as evidenced by the fact that she agreed to make some information about her private life available to her publishers for publicity purposes (246). This paper proposes to open up this space for Montgomery's celebrity agency even further. Engaging with theories of celebrity drawn primarily from sociology and film studies, I wish to probe this relationship between celebrity manufacture and celebrity agency or intervention, which I see as one of the vexed yet repressed questions in existing theories of celebrity. Going beyond Montgomery's simple agreement to participate in the commercialization of her works, I want to maintain that she developed a strategic and remarkably intelligent negotiation with the celebrity processes that surrounded her and in part tried to define her.

The first assumption that I claim can be usefully challenged is the notion that Montgomery's fame is extraordinary and unprecedented, particularly in its Canadian context. Pike argues that the "interest in Montgomery created by her works, her celebrity, and her identification with a specific locale can be compared in intensity only to the cult-like manifestations around a writer such as William Shakespeare, probably the greatest literary celebrity of all time" (239). Pike's subsequent comparison of forms of devotion to Shakespeare and to Montgomery is illuminating, but the focus on this comparison arguably decontextualizes Montgomery's celebrity. Throughout her career, L.M. Montgomery inhabited a form of literary celebrity that was not entirely unfamiliar to the Canadian literary establishment of her time. Like her near contemporary Mazo de la Roche (author of the *Jalna* books), Montgomery was an immensely popular novelist whose critical reputation suffered during the middle years of the twentieth century. As Clarence Karr argues in his book *Authors and Audiences: Popular Canadian Fiction in the Early Twentieth Century* (2000), a study of Montgomery and four of her contemporaries, "Canada's most famous author" in 1908 was Ralph Connor (3). Of course, the publication of *Anne of Green Gables* that year changed this ranking, but many of the processes at work in literary celebrity were already in place before Montgomery's novel burst onto the scene. In other words, Montgomery supplanted the power of already existing Canadian literary "stars" rather than initiated a completely new form of Canadian literary stardom. Seeing the fame that Montgomery ex-

perienced during her lifetime as contextual and systemic rather than extraordinary makes Montgomery's awareness of how she operated within discourses of celebrity far more likely and understandable: she had already witnessed the operations of celebrity in the literary world around her.

Moving beyond Montgomery's own lifetime, however, it is fair to say that no past or present literary celebrity in Canada has had the far-reaching cultural influence that L.M. Montgomery had — and continues to have. Such a claim, however, need not rely upon assessments of "how big" a star Montgomery has become, an exercise that often relies upon untheorized and arbitrary standards. Instead, the magnitude of Montgomery's fame has more to do with her dispersal, as a star phenomenon, across a wide range of cultural forms; as Carole Gerson has pertinently remarked, the "charisma" of Montgomery and of her best-known creation, *Anne of Green Gables*, "spills far beyond the notions of value constructed by the traditional literary critic, into a dense web of cultural activity that includes romance and popular culture, national identity, provincial and international economics, and social history" (146). Gerson's claim is another way of saying that Montgomery became a "star" in the sense that celebrity theorists often use the term; in fact, film and television critic John Ellis maintains that the "basic definition of a star is that of a performer in a particular medium whose figure enters into subsidiary forms of circulation, and then feeds back into future performances" (91). This idea of the dispersal of celebrity meanings lies at the heart of theories of the evolution of celebrity; as film historian Richard deCordova has argued of the emergence of Hollywood stars in the early twentieth century, "the question of the player's existence outside his or her work in film became the primary focus of discourse. The private lives of the players were constituted as a site of knowledge and truth" (98). This transformation of sites of knowledge has occurred — and continues to occur at a rapid pace — in a wide range of cultural fields besides film. In terms of the field of Canadian literature, there simply is no comparable Canadian literary persona who has, as Ellis says, entered "into subsidiary forms of circulation" in the culture at large the way that L.M. Montgomery has. But that doesn't mean that the phenomenon of stardom itself is specific to her as a Canadian writer.

Mary Rubio argues that "L.M. Montgomery can," on the contrary, "make some unique claims to fame" because she is one of the few popular writers whose books have retained interest for readers without being canonized and enshrined in college and university curricula ("Subverting the Trite" 12). What interests me about Montgomery's particular manifestation of literary celebrity is its added feature of self-consciousness; her career affords us a particularly rich archive that helps us understand the complexities of early twentieth-century literary fame. There is a tendency to see fame as less prominent a feature on the early Canadian literary scene precisely because of a lack of awareness of celebrity status. Clarence Karr, writing of

Montgomery, Connor, Robert Stead, Nellie McClung, and Arthur Stringer, observes that, "In spite of all the fame and fortune experienced by these five authors . . . , they remained essentially unchanged. Perhaps because they were Canadian, they exhibited little pretension; there was no 'putting on airs,' no inflated egos. Although their lifestyles improved, there would be no exotic, international vacations. . . . They all remained conventional, middle-class Canadians" (56-57). In short, they didn't *really* become celebrities, not in that globalized sense of stardom that we have inherited from Hollywood culture, because they lacked a conventional awareness of their own celebrity. Certainly, Montgomery could not be said to have indulged herself in celebrity splurges. But although she fits Karr's description of remaining in her conventionally middle-class life, she could hardly be called "essentially unchanged" by her celebrity or unaware of it. As I will argue, she was unusually aware of and articulate about the conditions and ironies of her celebrity. Her clear-eyed acquaintance with the workings of her own fame both challenges notions of a somehow more innocent, pre-mass media "cottage"-style celebrity in early Canada and complicates popular representations of her as a victim of the marketing strategies of others.

In making an argument for Montgomery as a strategic celebrity, I draw on a number of theories of celebrity that similarly complicate our understandings of the "star." In much of the pioneering work on celebrity, theorists have debated whether stardom was essentially a condition of production or of consumption: as Richard Dyer asks in his foundational study, *Stars* (1979), "are stars a phenomenon of production (arising from what the makers of film provide) or of consumption (arising from what the audience for films demands)?" (9). Studies of celebrity that followed in Dyer's footsteps have tended to lean toward one side of this question or the other, resulting in the tendency to deny activity to the cultural agent caught in the middle of the dialectic — the star. Even in later studies of celebrity that analyze the power of the star in complex ideological terms, the star remains caught between hegemonic powers and audiences. P. David Marshall's *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture* (1997) is an example of a study that follows this line of analysis:

The celebrity articulates a tension between the meanings provided by a dominant culture that elevates certain individuals and the readings or rearticulation of those meanings by various collective formations in their selective embracement of these public representations. (xii)

Theoretically speaking, the celebrity seems eternally caught, it would seem, between the "rock" of hegemonic powers and the "hard place" of audiences. To be sure, the celebrity is not untouched by either of these powers and is in part mutually constituted by them. The effect of such a dialectic, however, is to suppress the possibility of agency being located within ce-

lebrities themselves. This present study of L.M. Montgomery, therefore, seeks to challenge the persistent binaries of production and consumption in celebrity theory through a study of Montgomery's creation of spaces for intervention in her own construction as a star. In Montgomery, I discern a persistent and intelligent intervention into the dialectic between production and consumption in cultural spaces such as her scrapbooks, her journals, and her representation in the popular press.

What was fame like for Montgomery, a woman of such quick intelligence and pragmatism that, like Margaret Atwood six decades later, she was well able to diagnose her own condition as a public commodity? For starters, Montgomery, who was a sharp-eyed chronicler of community life, gives us an account of how fame sends ripples through one's community of peers and alters social relations, particularly perceptions of the worth and accomplishments of individuals. This social exchange is well noted by theorists of celebrity. Marshall observes that, on the one hand, celebrities are assumed to be important, to be worth attending to, and yet, "In another sense, the celebrity is viewed in the most antipathetic manner" as representing "success without . . . work. . . . The celebrity sign effectively contains this tension between authentic and false cultural value" (xi). The tension that Marshall describes erupts mainly because of the tendency to obscure or to mystify labour where celebrities are concerned. As Dyer notes, early film stars were often photographed wearing "exclusive designs, designs that clearly make work impossible," and the magazines in which many of these photographs were shown tended correspondingly to present the stars at play, enjoying leisure activities. Again, argues Dyer, "What is suppressed, or only fleetingly acknowledged, in these articles, is that making films is work, that films are produced" (39). Montgomery had the same difficulty safeguarding the idea that her fame was produced by work, that it was earned. She carefully noted, in her autobiographical writings, how fame altered her relationships with friends, acquaintances, and family on this very score of contested labour. As she wrote to Ephraim Weber only three months after the publication of *Anne of Green Gables*, "If you want to find out just how much *envy* and *petty spite* and *meanness* exists in people, even people who call themselves your friends, just write a successful book or do something they can't do, and you'll find out!" (*Green Gables Letters* [10 Sept. 1908] 75). Later that same year, she elaborated:

if you have lived all your life in a little village, where everybody is every whit as good and clever and successful as everybody else, and if you are foolish enough to do something which the others in the village cannot do, especially if that something brings you a small modicum of fame and fortune a certain class of people will take it as a personal insult to themselves, will belittle you and your accomplishment in every way and will go out of their way to make sure that you are informed of their opinions. I could not begin to tell you all the petty flings of malice and spite of which I have been

the target of late, even among some of my own relations. (*Green Gables Letters* [22 Dec. 1908] 78-79)

Another tribulation caused by her fame, which Montgomery would bemoan from time to time, was the tendency of these “friends” and acquaintances to retell the story of their past relationships with her in their own self-aggrandizing ways. Often, her journals offered her a space in which to intervene in these questionable narratives. For instance, in 1931, over two decades after publishing *Anne of Green Gables* with the L.C. Page Company of Boston, she recorded in her journal her frustration at one such retelling of the past, namely John Garvin’s claim that he managed to persuade a Canadian publisher to accept *Anne of Green Gables*: “To be sure,” Montgomery wearily recounted of an evening with the Authors’ Association, “poor old Garvin came up with his perennial yarn of advising that mythical Toronto firm to ‘take on’ *Green Gables*. I can’t remember how many times he has told me that” (*Selected Journals IV* [15 Feb. 1931] 107). (Garvin was apparently under a misconception of considerable proportions: no Canadian edition of the novel would exist until Ryerson reprinted it in 1942.) In another, more painful instance, Montgomery’s former teacher, Izzie Robinson, told the *Toronto Star* in 1927 that she had been Montgomery’s early admirer and mentor, but as Montgomery clearly recalled in her journal, Miss Robinson had actually been cruel to her, and the adult writer had taken her revenge by making Miss Robinson the model for the mean-spirited teacher in *Emily of New Moon*, Miss Brownell (*Selected Journals III* [29 Oct. 1927] 358). Her journals serve as a space wherein Montgomery the celebrity could intervene and contest the narratives that were circulating about the formation of her fame, an intervention made even more acute given Montgomery’s growing realization that her journals would become published documents beyond her lifetime. In these created spaces, Montgomery could disrupt the seemingly airtight exchange between production and circulation of celebrity discourses by any number of agents and their consumption by an audience eager to hear about Montgomery’s life.

“Setting the record straight” is rarely a straightforward matter, however, and Montgomery, like many celebrities, tended to get involved in multiple narratives of her own fame. For example, there is for a writer a risk involved in intervening in celebrity discourses about the swift rise to fame in order to reinstate the labour involved in writing. Such narratives of the rewards of hard labour conflict with influential discourses of authorial inspiration as something that is almost divinely bestowed. As a result, some of Montgomery’s own fame narratives obscured the years of patient toil that allowed her to win her world-wide audience. As Montgomery confided, once again, to her correspondent Ephraim Weber, “I’ve served a long and hard apprenticeship — how hard no one knows but myself. The world

only hears of my successes. It *doesn't* hear of all my early buffets and repulses" (*Green Gables Letters* [22 Dec. 1908] 79-80). For a writer still in the early years of success, it is especially risky to represent struggle. By 1917, however, as an established author penning her memoirs, Montgomery was better able to seek recourse to a narrative that did inscribe struggle and labour. In *The Alpine Path: The Story of My Career*, she writes feelingly of how "dreadfully hurt" she felt "when a story or poem over which I had laboured and agonized came back, with one of those icy rejection slips" (60). And yet, because narratives of success are more welcome than narratives of failure, in everyday life no less than in celebrity discourse, Montgomery acknowledges that she kept those failures to herself in her early years: "I believed in myself and I struggled on alone, in secrecy and silence. I never told my ambitions and efforts and failures to any one" (60). Narratives of failure have little cultural space or recognition unless they are, as in *The Alpine Path*, preludes to a narrative of success and thereby justified by that success. No wonder the communities of newly-minted celebrities often react with jealousy or self-interest, as Montgomery claims hers did when she attained fame: they have consumed the myth of sudden success without its excised, repressed twin — the narrative of apprenticeship.

As a compensation or penance for fame, then, literary celebrities often find themselves reintroducing the narrative of apprenticeship. This Montgomery does throughout *The Alpine Path*, even, of course, in its title. She opens her account by belittling the very idea that she could have anything so grandiose-sounding as a "career." What she has had instead has been a "long, monotonous struggle" (9). Rubio has read this opening of *The Alpine Path* through the variable of gender: a "male author of equal fame," she points out, "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," whereas women authors of the time felt they had to temper their literary ambitions with a judicious sampling of humility ("Subverting the Trite" 17). This gendered rhetoric was doubtless at work in *The Alpine Path*, although Rubio adds that the very experience of being asked to write of her success may have had the effect of buttressing Montgomery's own professional self-esteem. But there may be an additional discourse in operation here, a discourse of celebrity that runs alongside the gendered language of the inability *topos* — the discourse of earned success. The literary celebrity, prey to the glamourization of her literary life narrative, compensates by de-glamourizing it. Thus, when Montgomery concludes *The Alpine Path*, she does so by firmly re-emphasizing this idea of a slow, painful struggle, in sweepingly Biblical, Bunyanesque language: "The 'Alpine Path' has been climbed, after many years of toil and endeavor. It was not an easy ascent," but rather a journey "through bitter suffering and discouragement and darkness, through doubt

and disbelief, through valleys of humiliation and over delectable hills where sweet things would lure us from our quest" (95-96). By framing her apprenticeship narrative in religious terms that would have been acceptably humble and labour-oriented to many of her readers, Montgomery finds a socially-sanctioned way to appease all the old jealousy and spite that she has endured as a literary celebrity. She intervenes in the narratives circulating about her own celebrity, takes out an editorial red pen, and sets about creating an alternative text.

This is, of course, a clever way to advocate for one's own celebrity status, and Montgomery was nothing if not canny and clear-eyed about her fame. In *The Alpine Path*, she accompanies her self-deprecating emphasis on the toil and failures of her apprenticeship period with a corresponding surprise at her success. Still, Montgomery's own celebrity narratives remain multi-layered and sometimes contradictory. Throughout these passages, there is a sureness of eventual success and recognition that belies her modest surprise. For instance, Montgomery includes in *The Alpine Path* an extract from a 1901 journal entry about the "landmark" poems that she occasionally wrote to mark her progress in artistic achievement: "A year ago, I could not have written them, but now they come easily and naturally. This encourages me to hope that in the future I may achieve something worth while. I never expect to be famous. I merely want to have a recognized place among good workers in my chosen profession" (64). (It is worth noting that the corresponding journal entry reads slightly differently: "I never expect to be famous — I don't want to be, really, often as I've dreamed of it. But I *do* want to have a recognized place among good workers in my chosen profession" [*Selected Journals I* (21 Mar. 1901) 258]). Again, we have the contrast between fame and honest labour that will cause Montgomery so many problems with her friends and family, but it is a distinction to which she herself partially subscribes. And, in the final analysis, we have a writer who, under cover of her self-deprecation, is genuinely programmatic about and intent upon making her mark. Although Mollie Gillen narrates the story of Montgomery's "instant" success by claiming that, in the weeks following the publication of *Anne of Green Gables*, "an astounded L.M. Montgomery began to understand that she had produced a best-seller" (71), a less astounded, astute Montgomery knew long before, in some way, that this was the sort of recognition that she had long worked for. As she herself admits when she comes to write the story of her career, "Down, deep down, under all discouragement and rebuff, I knew I would 'arrive' some day" (60). Between the workings of market production and the consumption and reverencing of Montgomery by generations of readers, there exists this conflicted but powerful instance of celebrity agency and self-representation.

This delicate weaving of discourses of individual achievement and community allegiance in Montgomery's self-fashionings (on the one hand, "I

knew I would 'arrive' one day" and, on the other, "I never expect to be famous") is characteristic of celebrity's complex negotiations. There has been a great deal of valuable work on celebrity as a space in which a whole range of social tensions and paradoxes get played out. As is true of so many ideological approaches to stardom, Dyer's work is foundational. He explains that stars are

related to contradictions in ideology — whether within the dominant ideology, or between it and other subordinated / revolutionary ideologies. The relation may be one of displacement . . . or the suppression of one half of the contradiction and the foregrounding of the other . . . or else it may be that the star effects a "magic" reconciliation of the apparently incompatible terms. (30)

This approach was a rich one for theorists of stardom, since it broke with analyses that tended to assume a one-to-one relation between a star and the particular ideas he or she "represented." After Dyer, stars became what he called "star texts," or what Marshall has more recently called "a negotiated terrain of significance" (47). One of the major ideological categories under negotiation in celebrity is that of individualism itself. As Marshall states, "The celebrity is centrally involved in the social construction of division between the individual and the collective, and works discursively in this area" (25). In Montgomery's multiple narratives of her fame, narratives that veer between individual labour rewarded and the demands and judgments of communities and audiences, we therefore have a "negotiated terrain." Is literary accomplishment individual? Collective? Created by marketing forces and publishers? Or by communities of readers? Montgomery's narrative interventions do not "magically" solve these contradictions and alternatives, but they give voice to their active contestations.

By no means did Montgomery simply wait for the writing of her memoirs to contest the celebrity narratives that circulated about her. She found creative ways, both in the press itself and in more (temporarily) private spaces such as her scrapbooks, to intervene in and even adjudicate those narratives even as they were taking shape. She assiduously collected clippings of her many reviews ("Scrapbook of Book Reviews"), for example, and when she wrote about her reviews in her journals, she tended to give fair hearing to critical treatments of her works, adding to them her own fairly even-handed assessments. On the other hand, when she was challenged in a way that she felt was unfair — as when, in 1930, she was accused in a review of her 1929 novel *Magic for Marigold* of using Islanders in her fiction for her own financial benefit — she could state her rights and her achievements as emphatically as any professional agent. As she wrote in reply,

Yes, "after all," as one of your correspondents so condescendingly remarks . . . my books do "travel abroad." My audience is not wholly in Prince Edward Island. And from all over the world thousands of letters come to me annually telling me that my books have filled the writers' wish to see P.E. Island because I have depicted it as such a charming place. Even . . . as some of your readers may recall . . . so insignificant a person as the Hon. Stanley Baldwin, then Premier of Great Britain, asked the Dominion Government to include Prince Edward Island in his itinerary of 1927 because he had become so interested in it through reading my books. ("L.M. Montgomery's" 10)

This was a writer who not only knew the extent of her fame but was also adept at deploying it strategically in order to defend the integrity of her work.

In her dealings with the press, Montgomery knew both when she needed to satisfy the public and her publisher's need for publicity and when she needed to intervene in the fashioning of her public self. As Pike has observed of Montgomery's collection of press notices in her scrapbooks, much of this publicity material made connections between Montgomery's physical appearance and her work (245). From the evidence of the scrapbooks, this connection seems to have begun when Montgomery made her first major foray into promotional touring, a trip to Boston in November 1910. She was besieged by journalists and admirers, and her appearance attracted particular comment in the press coverage she received. As one reporter from the *Boston Republic* noted on 19 November, "Miss Montgomery is short and slight, indeed of a form almost childishly small, though graceful and symmetrical. She has an oval face, with delicate aquiline features, bluish-grey eyes and an abundance of dark brown hair. Her pretty pink evening gown somewhat accentuated her frail and youthful aspect" ("Red Scrapbook #1"). The attention to the physiognomy of the famous writer is familiar, in the case of celebrated male and female authors alike, but the additional attention to dresses and other accoutrements was Montgomery's due as a woman writer at this time. Looking through the scrapbook she kept during the time of her Boston tour, in which are contained many such press notices, this careful attention to the details of Montgomery's dress is everywhere, obsessively so at times. The newspapers ran fashion-image photographs of Montgomery, clad in a fur-trimmed coat and fashionably veiled hat ("Red Scrapbook #1"). Of course, such attention was not limited to her much-publicized trip to Boston. In a much later scrapbook item from the mid-1920s, detailing Montgomery's speech to the Canadian Business Women's club in Hamilton, the *Hamilton Spectator* journalist is at great pains to describe the now older author's hairstyle: "thick hair, slightly graying, which she wore waved and coiled becomingly about her well-shaped head" ("Red Scrapbook #2").

Montgomery saw much of this attention with characteristic amusement as simply her lot as a public individual. Pike notes that Montgomery saw the disparity between her everyday life and these romantic idealizations of her sitting, "beautifully arrayed, at a desk" (*Selected Journals* III [26 May 1926]185; qtd. in Pike 244). She was tolerant of — if not amused by — the persistent attention to her appearance, but she was downright irked by attempts to delve into her personal life; as she wrote to MacMillan in May 1909, "I don't care what they say about my book — it is public property — but I wish they would leave my ego alone" (*My Dear Mr. M.* [21 May 1909] 44). Montgomery wished to rely upon a simple, pragmatic division between the public product (the writing) and the private entity (the writer), but the celebrity culture that was taking shape in North America during the years she experienced her success militated against any such easy division. As deCordova notes, "The star is characterized by a fairly thoroughgoing articulation of the paradigm professional/private life," and those two realms "are constituted in what might be called analogous or redundant relation" (27). This was one celebrity paradigm shift to which Montgomery never accommodated herself. Still, as is revealed in one newspaper snippet dating sometime during her residence in Leaskdale, Ontario from her scrapbook of book reviews, the distinction between private and public was porous to the point of becoming a comic illusion. After quoting Montgomery's reasons for not entering a Prince Edward Island writing competition, the journalist concludes that "Her words, above quoted, although not intended for publication, are an inspiration also and we commend them to our readers" ("Scrapbook of Book Reviews"). So much for "off the record" privacy.

On occasion, Montgomery's amusement at the workings of literary publicity could deepen into an indignation that called forth her active intervention. On one occasion, Montgomery was so irked by a particularly fanciful interview with her that she clipped it, pasted it into her scrapbook, and wrote under the byline, "This 'interview' is fiction from beginning to end" ("Scrapbook of Book Reviews"). Once again, the temporarily private space of the scrapbooks allowed Montgomery an opportunity for contestation: what deCordova would call the "thoroughgoing articulation of the paradigm professional/private life" decreed that this private revenge would one day become public. Montgomery, who knew that the private materials of her life (journals, scrapbooks, letters) would one day be studied as context for her fiction, was able in these venues to retaliate privately in the short term and publicly in perpetuity.

However much Montgomery was able to let the complexities of her very public/private life work in her cause, there were aspects of this celebrity condition that clearly proved debilitating. Although critics have made much of Montgomery's ability to carry on a private life — as Mrs. Ewan Macdonald, the wife of a Presbyterian minister — it is clear that this sup-

posed protection of privacy was actually a complicated balancing act that often left the private under increasing pressure. As Alexandra Heilbron claims when paraphrasing oral reminiscences of Montgomery, "When young fans phoned Maud at her home, she graciously spoke with them — she was never rude or impatient about having been disturbed at home. She granted interviews to anyone who requested one, even schoolgirls writing for their school paper. . . . [S]he was generous with her time, even though she often had so little to spare" (159). In *Remembering Lucy Maud Montgomery* (2001), Heilbron compiles several such remembrances of Montgomery from some of those young girls whom Montgomery helped and from church members whose small congregations Montgomery spoke to, even though such secondhand reminiscences are of course open to question. Such accounts sound like the perfect marriage of a public and a private life, and yet their veracity is truly at issue; readers of Montgomery's journals know how frantically exhausted Montgomery often was, trying to keep up with the day-to-day demands of being a minister's wife, the wife of an increasingly ill man, a mother of two boys, while taking on enormous numbers of speaking engagements and the like. In fact, although Heilbron's book of reminiscences paints a rosier picture of Montgomery and her public, the tension between public and private that is evidenced in the journals is never hinted at in these remembrances.

However weary she was — and readers of her journals now know how very often she felt worn out and exhausted — Montgomery worked hard to fulfill all of the roles that she felt she was given in her life. As a result, what we witness is the effect of celebrity on negotiations of women's roles, as traditionally defined. Dyer's observation that "stars embody social values that are to some degree in crisis" (25) finds a striking correlative in the construction of the literary celebrity L.M. Montgomery at this particular period in Canadian history. Heilbron's section divisions in *Remembering Lucy Maud Montgomery* are suggestive of this crowding of roles: "Maud, Beloved Aunt and Grandmother"; "Mrs. Macdonald as an Employer"; "Maud as Neighbour and Friend"; "Mrs. Macdonald, Our Sunday School Teacher"; and, finally, as a kind of crowning but inclusive role, "L.M. Montgomery, Famous Author." Montgomery's fame had to make room for all of the additional roles Heilbron lists and many more besides. Even the alternate namings of Montgomery as "Maud" versus "Mrs. Macdonald" in Heilbron's list signal the tensions inherent in such an act of role inclusion. Montgomery herself enjoyed telling a humorous story that reveals how difficult people could find it to regard her as the possessor of multiple roles. During one of her many visits to Prince Edward Island after her marriage and move to Ontario, the local newspaper announced that "Miss. L.M. Montgomery" had arrived for a visit with her young son. Of course, in social parlance of the time, this would have suggested that Montgomery was an unmarried mother, and this was still thought quite shocking in

Montgomery's circles, so Montgomery would tell the story as a comic one, protesting that she was not quite the modern woman the newspaper evidently thought her. And yet, the confusion that reigned at this time when a "Miss L.M. Montgomery" who writes books had to be reconciled with a Mrs. Macdonald who raises children has its less than comic aspect ("Red Scrapbook #2").

The role conflicts occasioned by Montgomery's celebrity were not made any easier by her knowledge that, in Rubio's words, her husband "manifested a deep underlying hostility to her success as a writer" ("Introduction" 8). The germs of that hostility appear in some of the newspaper clippings of her wedding to Ewan Macdonald. One, rather ominously, is headlined "Famous Authoress Weds a Minister" and subtitled "Miss Montgomery of Charlottetown, Who Wrote 'Ann [sic] of Green Gables' Married to Ontario Pastor" ("Red Scrapbook #1"). Clearly, Macdonald seemed doomed to anonymity in this domestic alliance, a situation few men of the time would have found the resources to deal with. Macdonald's growing resentment of her fame must have been very hard to bear, particularly when Montgomery also had to face the press's constant questions about how she managed to combine her many roles. In her scrapbooks she collected many such instances of interviews in which journalists marvelled over her many roles, clearly suggesting that to combine authorship and the life of a minister's wife was considered unconventional and odd; Heilbron's book concludes with a reprinting of ten articles on Montgomery published between 1909 and 1942. As C.L. Cowan exclaimed in the *Toronto Star Weekly* in 1928, "this was a new experience to meet a literary celebrity who was also a parson's wife" (Heilbron 231). Several journalists were fixated upon Montgomery's role as a mother of two young children and hastened to assure their readers that her first priority lay with their care and not with her writing, and fittingly, in demonstrating the primacy of the maternal role, these journalists also assert the primacy of Montgomery's married name. Ethel Chapman, in her profile of "The Author of Anne" in the October 1919 issue of *Maclean's*, makes Montgomery's maternal priorities clear, but rather anxiously: "The author of Anne does not devote herself entirely to the making of books. . . . She is a mother who mothers her children personally; they have always been considered before her books" (Heilbron 199). Cowan's article continues along similar lines: "One could see that Mrs. E. Macdonald — or L.M. Montgomery as the world prefers to call her — is a proud mother" (Heilbron 234). As a much later novelist, Carol Shields, once wrote of her fictional author and mother figure, Reta Winters, in *Unless* (2002), "'how did you find the time?' people used to chorus, and in that query I often registered a hint of blame: was I neglecting my darling sprogs for my writing career?" (4). Sadly, it seems, not much may have changed in regard to women, literary success, and domestic roles since Montgomery's time: mothers' writing is still thought, in some quar-

ters, to place the “sprogs” at risk.

It is easy to chronicle the ways in which celebrity may confine and restrict a literary star, and in the case of Montgomery and her role conflict, her frequent exhaustion, and her painful awareness of the jealousies of others, it is particularly easy to do. But for Montgomery, too, fame brought expanded possibilities to make contact with major political figures and to intervene in some of the most pressing social questions of the day. This is a crucial factor to remember, particularly in the face of much talk of celebrity as a type of pathology, a plague visited upon unprepared victims. In celebrity theory, too, pathology needs to be tempered by a clear assessment of celebrity as a form of power. David Marshall calls celebrity “a less definable form of power that operates in contemporary culture” (ix) — less definable, that is, than that of politicians and corporations. But Marshall insists nevertheless that celebrities are

given greater presence and a wider scope of activity and agency than are those who make up the rest of the population. They are allowed to move on the public stage while the rest of us watch. They are allowed to express themselves quite individually and idiosyncratically while the rest of the members of the population are constructed as demographic aggregates. (ix)

What use the celebrity makes of that potential power, that extra cultural airtime is another matter, but Marshall’s formulation at least opens up the possibility of celebrity agency. In our own day, we see this issue of celebrity power demonstrated in a figure like the U2 rock star Bono. Now travelling to many countries as an activist on behalf of third-world economic issues and world-wide AIDS relief, Bono is frank about the way in which world leaders use his star power and he, in turn, uses theirs. As journalist Drew Fagan wrote in *The Globe and Mail* in May 2004,

He knows he’s being used, he said, and that’s fine with him if the result is to get more help to those with HIV in developing countries. . . . Or as Bono put it after flying to Ottawa from Washington yesterday morning (commercial, and on his dime) to attend Mr. Martin’s announcement of increased AIDS funding: “I’m not a cheap date.” (A4)

The distance between a contemporary rock star and L.M. Montgomery may seem incongruous on the surface, but both examples focus on the question of the political efficacy of celebrity. Montgomery’s celebrity was confirmed by the notice that significant political figures took of her writing. In September 1910, Governor General Earl Grey telegraphed her to request a visit when he next came to Charlottetown, and as Montgomery herself reminded her public when arguing against the review of *Magic for Marigold*, British Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin made a particular point of stop-

ping in Prince Edward Island to meet Montgomery in 1927. Rubio argues that because the political world of the first quarter of the twentieth century was so “disordered,” political leaders might well respond favourably to a fictional world in which a “pattern of order, disruption, renegotiation, and a re-established (if a slightly modified) order . . . provided solace” (“Introduction” 6). Also, the bucolic scenes that Montgomery’s books offered must have seemed similarly soothing in a time of rapid industrialization and militarization.

But Montgomery did more than simply meet major political figures. Her opinion was sought, published, and listened to on questions regarding Canadian publishing policy, women’s suffrage, and the World Wars. As Irene Gammel and Elizabeth Epperly maintain, “Montgomery’s opinion made an impact in the daily media, and in 1923 the *Toronto Star* listed her as one of the twelve greatest women in Canada” (3). For example, the periodical *Everywoman’s World* asked Montgomery to ponder two questions: What did she hope to see as the outcome of the First World War, and what did she hope to see by way of outcome for women in particular? Montgomery struck a much less conservative note than usual, noting that “the women who bear and train the nation’s sons should have some voice in the political issues that may send those sons to die on battlefields” (“Red Scrapbook #1”). On one occasion, Montgomery shared the podium with Emmaline Pankhurst, but her theme was not suffrage on this occasion but instead the need of the Canadian reading public to buy more Canadian books. Montgomery’s advice, that one book out of three bought by a household should be Canadian, received extensive media coverage (“Red Scrapbook #2”). When the figure of the “flapper” became the fashion in the twenties, again Montgomery was asked to comment, and again, she responded in a less conservative fashion than one might expect, pointing out that “every generation . . . thinks that the present one is bound to perdition, while the scandalized ones were probably the despair of their own parents” (“Red Scrapbook #2”). Reading through these lively interviews on matters of public policy, cultural trends, and politics, the overwhelming impression is of a woman who is entirely comfortable with her own ability to speak on a national stage about a wide range of subjects. For all the private tension and public scepticism about her role as a public Canadian, these materials indicate that Montgomery performed this role with a sense of utter entitlement.

An additional question that arises when talking about celebrity power is the use of that power: was there, for instance, any question of Montgomery using what Marshall would call her “greater presence and a wider scope of activity and agency” to her own ends? There are instances where Montgomery did decide to use her power to her advantage as well as instances where she chose not to. When, in the first blush of the publishing success of *Anne of Green Gables*, she cleverly sent out old manuscripts of

poems and stories to magazines, she was, in Gillen's words, "honest enough to recognize" that a number of them "sold only because of her new-found fame" (78). This is akin to the marketing strategy of reissuing paperback versions of books immediately after their author has won a prestigious award: aware that her own cultural capital had sharply risen, Montgomery, like the good businesswoman that she was, used the celebrity factor to promote her work and augment her income. Montgomery also arguably dealt in literary "futures" in that she was very aware of the likely future value of objects associated with her. In 1922, she left explicit instructions in her journal that this life narrative should "*never be destroyed*" but that "My heirs might publish an *abridged volume* after my death, if I do not myself do it before" (*Selected Journals* III [16 Apr. 1922] 51; emphasis in original). She bemoaned the fact that she had not preserved all of her literary manuscripts, and when she finished *Emily of New Moon* that same year, she "vowed to keep" it (Epperly 74) since "one day it may have a certain value" (*Selected Journals* III [20 July 1922] 61). Less predictable objects also came to have celebrity value for fans of Montgomery's fiction. As early as 1925, Norma Phillips Muir reported in *The Toronto Star Weekly* that some Islanders, welcoming visitors to their homes, would offer them "the chair L.M. Montgomery sat in, when she was here" (Heilbron 230). Montgomery herself realized, as the years went on, that domestic objects associated with her would accrue this sort of touristic value. In a journal entry of 1930, she recounts coming across some lacework that she had made as a young woman for her hope chest, noting ruefully that "They may have a value someday because 'L.M. Montgomery' made them" (*Selected Journals* IV [10 May 1930] 49-50). As critics such as Diane Tye and Jeanette Lynes have demonstrated, Montgomery was fully borne out in her calculations of the role of domestic celebrity objects in the extensive tourist industry associated with her literary reputation. Montgomery's presentiments as to the likely value — in cultural capital terms, here — of her domestic handiwork were all too accurate. As objects of celebrity devotion, bedspreads and lacework share cultural space with the author's literary output.

Beyond canny business decisions, were there moments in Montgomery's life when she was tempted to make the difficulties of her wearying life a bit lighter by playing the celebrity card? As the clever woman that she was, Montgomery knew that there were times in her life when it would be advantageous for her to play "Miss L.M. Montgomery" rather than "Mrs. Ewan Macdonald," but she was still so convinced of the ethical distinction between the private and the public that she more often than not decided not to. Sometimes this was a bitter thought to her: in February 1931, for instance, Montgomery and her husband travelled to her son Chester's school, Knox College, in Toronto to deal with reports of Chester's failing academic work. The secretary and chair of the college were both condescending to her and Ewan and, to make matters even more humiliating,

the interview concluded with Montgomery breaking her pearl necklace and having to ignominiously scramble about to retrieve the pearls cascading across the floor. Later, Montgomery bitterly recorded in her journal, "I have never felt so *insignificant*." As though instantly reminded of the realm in which she was, by contrast, given great personal significance, Montgomery mused,

I wonder if those men had known I was "L.M. Montgomery" if they would not have been a little more considerate. I have often seen it work out so. But I took good care they should not know. I shall always remember just how they behaved to plain, obscure, countrified Mrs. Ewan Macdonald. (*Selected Journals IV* [8 Feb. 1931] 105)

The fact that Montgomery saved the celebrity card for the management of her career and the selling of books offers us a critique of some forms of celebrity power that Montgomery clearly felt were unjustified. Along with her steadfast adherence to the idea of writing as labour, Montgomery implicitly challenged the celebrity system's tendency to flatten out the playing fields of social power. The central critique launched by Marshall is that the fields of celebrity power have become too porous:

the disciplinary boundaries between the domains of popular culture and political culture have been eroded through the migration of communicative strategies and public relations from the entertainment industries to the organization of the spectacle of politics. . . . [P]olitics, like the culture industries, attempts to play with and contain affective power through its intense focus on the personal, the intimate, and the individual qualities of leadership in its process of legitimation. (xiii)

Marshall's response speaks intensely to our own political moment, but in her own way Montgomery's determination to contain her celebrity power to fields wherein she saw its workings as legitimate has its own wisdom to offer to our current celebrity culture.

With Montgomery, then, we have the spectacle of a celebrity author intervening in and thereby challenging the persistent dialectic between production and consumption that so many theorists of celebrity have found fundamental to the phenomenon. In her journals, her scrapbooks, her interactions with newspaper media, and her implied ethics of celebrity fields of power, Montgomery was no simple product of either top-down literary management or the devotion of a mass reading public. She embodied the very tensions and complexities of the celebrity industry that was rapidly taking shape in Hollywood during the years spanned by her career.

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